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JEWISH HISTORY

AN ESSAY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

BY

S. M. DUBNOW

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PREFACE TO THE GERMAN TRANSLATION

The author of the present essay, S. M. Dubnow, occupies a well-nigh dominating position in Russian-Jewish literature as an historian and an acute critic. His investigations into the history of the Polish-Russian Jews, especially his achievements in the history of Chassidism, have been of fundamental importance in these departments. What raises Mr. Dubnow far above the status of the professional historian, and awakens the reader's lively interest in him, is not so much the matter of his books, as the manner of presentation. It is rare to meet with an historian in whom scientific objectivity and thoroughness are so harmoniously combined with an ardent temperament and plastic ability. Mr. Dubnow's scientific

activity, first and last, is a striking refutation of the widespread opinion that identifies attractiveness of form in the work of a scholar with superficiality of content. Even his strictly scientific investigations, besides offering the scholar a wealth of new suggestions, form instructive and entertaining reading matter for the educated layman. In his critical essays, Mr. Dubnow shows himself to be possessed of keen psychologic insight. By virtue of this quality of delicate perception, he aims to assign to every historical fact its proper place in the line of development, and so establish the bond between it and the general history of mankind. This psychologic ability contributes vastly to the interest aroused by Mr. Dubnow's historical works outside of the limited circle of scholars. There is a passage in one of his books[1] in which, in

[1] In the Introduction to his *Historische Mitteilungen, Vorarbeiten zu einer Geschichte der polnisch-russischen Juden.*

his incisive manner, he expresses his views on the limits and tasks of historical writing. As the passage bears upon the methods employed in the present essay, and, at the same time, is a characteristic specimen of our author's style, I take the liberty of quoting:

"The popularization of history is by no means to be pursued to the detriment of its severely scientific treatment. What is to be guarded against is the notion that tedium is inseparable from the scientific method. I have always been of the opinion that the dulness commonly looked upon as the prerogative of scholarly inquiries, is not an inherent attribute. In most cases it is conditioned, not by the nature of the subject under investigation, but by the temper of the investigator. Often, indeed, the tediousness of a learned disquisition is intentional: it is considered one of the polite conventions of the academic guild, and by many is identified with sci-

entific thoroughness and profound learning..... If, in general, deadening, hidebound caste methods, not seldom the cover for poverty of thought and lack of cleverness, are reprehensible, they are doubly reprehensible in history. The history of a people is not a mere mental discipline, like botany or mathematics, but a living science, a *magistra vitæ*, leading straight to national self-knowledge, and acting to a certain degree upon the national character. History is a science *by* the people *for* the people, and, therefore, its place is the open forum, not the scholar's musty closet. We relate the events of the past to the people, not merely to a handful of archaeologists and numismaticians. We work for national self-knowledge, not for our own intellectual diversion."

These are the principles that have guided Mr. Dubnow in all his works, and he has been true to them in the present essay, which exhibits in a remarkably

striking way the author's art of making "all things seem fresh and new, important and attractive." New and important his essay undoubtedly is. The author attempts, for the first time, a psychologic characterization of Jewish history. He endeavors to demonstrate the inner connection between events, and develop the ideas that underlie them, or, to use his own expression, lay bare the soul of Jewish history, which clothes itself with external events as with a bodily envelope. Jewish history has never before been considered from this philosophic point of view, certainly not in German literature. The present work, therefore, cannot fail to prove stimulating. As for the poet's other requirement, attractiveness, it is fully met by the work here translated. The qualities of Mr. Dubnow's style, as described above, are present to a marked degree. The enthusiasm flaming up in every line, coupled with his plastic, figu-

rative style, and his scintillating conceits, which lend vivacity to his presentation, is bound to charm the reader. Yet, in spite of the racy style, even the layman will have no difficulty in discovering that it is not a clever journalist, an artificer of well-turned phrases, who is speaking to him, but a scholar by profession, whose foremost concern is with historical truth, and whose every statement rests upon accurate, scientific knowledge; not a bookworm with pale, academic blood trickling through his veins, but a man who, with unsoured mien, with fresh, buoyant delight, offers the world the results laboriously reached in his study, after all evidences of toil and moil have been carefully removed; who derives inspiration from the noble and the sublime in whatever guise it may appear, and who knows how to communicate his inspiration to others.

The translator lays this book of an ac-

complished and spirited historian before the German public. He does so in the hope that it will shed new light upon Jewish history even for professional scholars. He is confident that in many to whom our unexampled past of four thousand years' duration is now *terra incognita*, it will arouse enthusiastic interest, and even to those who, like the translator himself, differ from the author in religious views, it will furnish edifying and suggestive reading. J. F.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The English translation of Mr. Dubnow's Essay is based upon the authorized German translation, which was made from the original Russian. It is published under the joint auspices of the Jewish Publication Society of America and the Jewish Historical Society of England. H. S.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

What is Jewish History? In the first place, what does it offer as to quantity and as to quality? What are its range and content, and what distinguishes it in these two respects from the history of other nations? Furthermore, what is the essential meaning, what the spirit, of Jewish History? Or, to put the question in another way, to what general results are we led by the aggregate of its facts, considered, not as a whole, but genetically, as a succession of evolutionary stages in the consciousness and education of the Jewish people?

If we could find precise answers to these several questions, they would constitute a characterization of Jewish History as accurate as is attainable. To present such a characterization succinctly is the purpose of the following essay.

JEWISH HISTORY

AN ESSAY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

I

The Range of Jewish History

Le peuple juif n'est pas seulement considérable par son antiquité, mais il est encore singulier en sa durée, qui a toujours continué depuis son origine jusqu'à maintenant . . . . S'étendant depuis les premiers temps jusqu'aux derniers, l'histoire des juifs enferme dans sa durée celle de toutes nos histoires.—Pascal, *Pensées*, II, 7.

To make clear the range of Jewish history, it is necessary to set down a few general, elementary definitions by way of introduction.

It has long been recognized that a fundamental difference exists between historical and unhistorical peoples, a difference growing out of the fact of the natural inequality between the various ele-

ments composing the human race. Unhistorical is the attribute applied to peoples that have not yet broken away, or have not departed very far, from the state of primitive savagery, as, for instance, the barbarous races of Asia and Africa who were the prehistoric ancestors of the Europeans, or the obscure, untutored tribes of the present, like the Tartars and the Kirghiz. Unhistorical peoples, then, are ethnic groups of all sorts that are bereft of a distinctive, spiritual individuality, and have failed to display normal, independent capacity for culture. The term historical, on the other hand, is applied to the nations that have had a conscious, purposeful history of appreciable duration; that have progressed, stage by stage, in their growth and in the improvement of their mode and their views of life; that have demonstrated mental productivity of some sort, and have elaborated principles of civilization and social life

more or less rational; nations, in short, representing not only zoologic, but also spiritual types.[1]

Chronologically considered, these latter nations, of a higher type, are usually divided into three groups: 1, the most ancient civilized peoples of the Orient, such as the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans; 2, the ancient or classic peoples of the Occident, the Greeks and the Romans; and 3, the modern peoples, the civilized nations of Europe and America of the present day. The most ancient peoples of the Orient, standing "at the threshold of history," were the first heralds of a religious conscious-

[1] "The primitive peoples that change with their environment, constantly adapting themselves to their habitat and to external nature, have no history. . . . Only those nations and states belong to history which display self-conscious action; which evince an inner spiritual life by diversified manifestations; and combine into an organic whole what they receive from without, and what they themselves originate." (Introduction to Weber's *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte*, i, pp. 16-18.)

ness and of moral principles. In hoary antiquity, when most of the representatives of the human kind were nothing more than a peculiar variety of the class mammalia, the peoples called the most ancient brought forth recognized forms of social life and a variety of theories of living of fairly far-reaching effect. All these culture-bearers of the Orient soon disappeared from the surface of history. Some (the Chaldeans, Phenicians, and Egyptians) were washed away by the flood of time, and their remnants were absorbed by younger and more vigorous peoples. Others (the Hindoos and Persians) relapsed into a semi-barbarous state; and a third class (the Chinese) were arrested in their growth, and remained fixed in immobility. The best that the antique Orient had to bequeath in the way of spiritual possessions fell to the share of the classic nations of the West, the Greeks and the Romans. They greatly

increased the heritage by their own spiritual achievements, and so produced a much more complex and diversified civilization, which has served as the substratum for the further development of the better part of mankind. Even the classic nations had to step aside as soon as their historical mission was fulfilled. They left the field free for the younger nations, with greater capability of living, which at that time had barely worked their way up to the beginnings of a civilization. One after the other, during the first two centuries of the Christian era, the members of this European family of nations appeared in the arena of history. They form the kernel of the civilized part of mankind at the present day.

Now, if we examine this accepted classification with a view to finding the place belonging to the Jewish people in the chronological series, we meet with embarrassing difficulties, and finally arrive at

the conclusion that its history cannot be accommodated within the compass of the classification. Into which of the three historical groups mentioned could the Jewish people be put? Are we to call it one of the most ancient, one of the ancient, or one of the modern nations? It is evident that it may lay claim to the first description, as well as to the second and the last. In company with the most ancient nations of the Orient, the Jewish people stood at the "threshold of history." It was the contemporary of the earliest civilized nations, the Egyptians and the Chaldeans. In those remote days it created and spread a religious world-idea underlying an exalted social and moral system surpassing everything produced in this sphere by its Oriental contemporaries. Again, with the classical Greeks and Romans, it forms the celebrated historical triad universally recognized as the source of all great systems of civilization.

Finally, in fellowship with the nations of to-day, it leads an historical life, striding onward in the path of progress without stay or interruption. Deprived of political independence, it nevertheless continues to fill a place in the world of thought as a distinctly marked spiritual individuality, as one of the most active and intelligent forces. How, then, are we to denominate this omnipresent people, which, from the first moment of its historical existence up to our days, a period of thirty-five hundred years, has been developing continuously. In view of this Methuselah among the nations, whose life is co-extensive with the whole of history, how are we to dispose of the inevitable barriers between "the most ancient" and "the ancient," between "the ancient" and "the modern" nations—the fateful barriers which form the milestones on the path of the historical peoples, and which the Jewish people has more than once overstepped?

A definition of the Jewish people must needs correspond to the aggregate of the concepts expressed by the three group-names, most ancient, ancient, and modern. The only description applicable to it is "the historical nation of all times," a description bringing into relief the contrast between it and all other nations of modern and ancient times, whose historical existence either came to an end in days long past, or began at a date comparatively recent. And granted that there are "historical" and "unhistorical" peoples, then it is beyond dispute that the Jewish people deserves to be called "the most historical" (*historicissimus*). If the history of the world be conceived as a circle, then Jewish history occupies the position of the diameter, the line passing through its centre, and the history of every other nation is represented by a chord marking off a smaller segment of the circle. The history of the Jewish

people is like an axis crossing the history of mankind from one of its poles to the other. As an unbroken thread it runs through the ancient civilization of Egypt and Mesopotamia, down to the present-day culture of France and Germany. Its divisions are measured by thousands of years.

Jewish history, then, in its range, or, better, in its duration, presents an unique phenomenon. It consists of the longest series of events ever recorded in the annals of a single people. To sum up its peculiarity briefly, it embraces a period of thirty-five hundred years, and in all this vast extent it suffers no interruption. At every point it is alive, full of sterling content. Presently we shall see that in respect to content, too, it is distinguished by exceptional characteristics.

II

The Content of Jewish History

From the point of view of content, or qualitative structure, Jewish history, it is well known, falls into two parts. The dividing point between the two parts is the moment in which the Jewish state collapsed irretrievably under the blows of the Roman Empire (70 C. E.). The first half deals with the vicissitudes of a nation, which, though frequently at the mercy of stronger nations, still maintained possession of its territory and government, and was ruled by its own laws. In the second half, we encounter the history of a people without a government, more than that, without a land, a people stripped of all the tangible accompaniments of nationality, and nevertheless successful in preserving its spiritual unity,

its originality, complete and undiminished.

At first glance, Jewish history during the period of independence seems to be but slightly different from the history of other nations. Though not without individual coloring, there are yet the same wars and intestine disturbances, the same political revolutions and dynastic quarrels, the same conflicts between the classes of the people, the same warring between economical interests. This is only a surface view of Jewish history. If we pierce to its depths, and scrutinize the processes that take place in its penetralia, we perceive that even in the early period there were latent within it great powers of intellect, universal principles, which, visibly or invisibly, determined the course of events. We have before us not a simple political or racial entity, but, to an eminent degree, "a spiritual people." The national development is based upon

an all-pervasive religious tradition, which lives in the soul of the people as the Sinaitic Revelation, the Law of Moses. With this holy tradition, embracing a luminous theory of life and an explicit code of morality and social converse, was associated the idea of the election of the Jewish people, of its peculiar spiritual mission. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" is the figurative expression of this ideal calling. It conveys the thought that the Israelitish people as a whole, without distinction of rank and regardless of the social prominence of individuals, has been called to guide the other nations toward sublime moral and religious principles, and to officiate for them, the laity as it were, in the capacity of priests. This exalted ideal would never have been reached, if the development of the Jewish people had lain along hackneyed lines; if, like the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, it had had an inflex-

ible caste of priests, who consider the guardianship of the spiritual treasures of the nation the exclusive privilege of their estate, and strive to keep the mass of the people in crass ignorance. For a time, something approaching this condition prevailed among the Jews. The priests descended from Aaron, with the Temple servants (the Levites), formed a priestly class, and played the part of authoritative bearers of the religious tradition. But early, in the very infancy of the nation, there arose by the side of this official, aristocratic hierarchy, a far mightier priesthood, a democratic fraternity, seeking to enlighten the whole nation, and inculcating convictions that make for a consciously held aim. The Prophets were the real and appointed executors of the holy command enjoining the "conversion" of all Jews into "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Their activity cannot be paralleled in the

whole range of the world's history. They were not priests, but popular educators and popular teachers. They were animated by the desire to instil into every soul a deeply religious consciousness, to ennoble every heart by moral aspirations, to indoctrinate every individual with an unequivocal theory of life, to inspire every member of the nation with lofty ideals. Their work did not fail to leave its traces. Slowly but deeply idealism entered into the very pith and marrow of the national consciousness. This consciousness gained in strength and amplitude century by century, showing itself particularly in the latter part of the first period, after the crisis known as "the Babylonian Exile." Thanks to the exertions of the *Soferim* (Scribes), directed toward the broadest popularization of the Holy Writings, and constituting the formal complement to the work of the Prophets, spiritual activity became an integral part of Jewish na-

tional life. In the closing centuries of its political existence, the Jewish people received its permanent form. There was imposed upon it the unmistakable hallmark of spirituality that has always identified it in the throng of the nations. Out of the bosom of Judaism went forth the religion that in a short time ran its triumphant course through the whole ancient world, transforming races of barbarians into civilized beings. It was the fulfilment of the Prophetical promise—that the nations would walk in the light of Israel.

At the very moment when the strength and fertility of the Jewish mind reached the culminating point, occurred a political revolution—the period of homeless wandering began. It seemed as though, before scattering the Jewish people to all ends of the earth, the providence of history desired to teach it a final lesson, to take with it on its way. It seemed to

say: "Now you may go forth. Your character has been sufficiently tempered; you can bear the bitterest of hardships. You are equipped with an inexhaustible store of energy, and you can live for centuries, yea, for thousands of years, under conditions that would prove the bane of other nations in less than a single century. State, territory, army, the external attributes of national power, are for you superfluous luxury. Go out into the world to prove that a people can continue to live without these attributes, solely and alone through strength of spirit welding its widely scattered particles into one firm organism!"—And the Jewish people went forth and proved it.

This "proof," adduced by Jewry at the cost of eighteen centuries of privation and suffering, forms the characteristic feature of the second half of Jewish history, the period of homelessness and dispersion. Uprooted from its political soil, national

life displayed itself on intellectual fields exclusively. "To think and to suffer" became the watchword of the Jewish people, not merely because forced upon it by external circumstances beyond its control, but chiefly because it was conditioned by the very disposition of the people, by its national inclinations. The extraordinary mental energy that had matured the Bible and the old writings in the first period, manifested itself in the second period in the encyclopedic productions of the Talmudists, in the religious philosophy of the middle ages, in Rabbinism, in the Kabbala, in mysticism, and in science. The spiritual discipline of the school came to mean for the Jew what military discipline is for other nations. His remarkable longevity is due, I am tempted to say, to the acrid spiritual brine in which he was cured. In its second half, the originality of Jewish history consists, indeed, in the circumstance that it is the

only history stripped of every active political element. There are no diplomatic artifices, no wars, no campaigns, no unwarranted encroachments backed by armed force upon the rights of other nations, nothing of all that constitutes the chief content—the monotonous and for the most part idea-less content—of many other chapters in the history of the world. Jewish history presents the chronicle of an ample spiritual life, a gallery of pictures representing national scenes. Before our eyes passes a long procession of facts from the fields of intellectual effort, of morality, religion, and social converse. Finally, the thrilling drama of Jewish martyrdom is unrolled to our astonished gaze. If the inner life and the social and intellectual development of a people form the kernel of history, and politics and occasional wars are but its husk,[1] then cer-

[1] "History, without these (inner, spiritual elements), is a shell without a kernel; and such is almost all the history which is extant in the

tainly the history of the Jewish diaspora is all kernel. In contrast with the history of other nations it describes, not the accidental deeds of princes and generals, not external pomp and physical prowess, but the life and development of a whole people. It gives heartrending expression to the spiritual strivings of a nation whose brow is resplendent with the thorny crown of martyrdom. It breathes heroism of mind that conquers bodily pain. In a word, Jewish history is history sublimated.[1]

world." (Macaulay, on Mitford's History of Greece, Collected Works, i. 198, ed. A. and C. Armstrong and Son.)

[1] A Jewish historian makes the pregnant remark: "If ever the time comes when the prophecies of the Jewish seers are fulfilled, and nation no longer raises the sword against nation; when the olive leaf instead of the laurel adorns the brow of the great, and the achievements of noble minds are familiar to the dwellers in cottages and palaces alike, then the history of the world will have the same character as Jewish history. On its pages will be inscribed, not the warrior's prowess and his victories, nor diplomatic schemes and triumphs, but the progress of culture and its practical application in real life."

In spite of the noteworthy features that raise Jewish history above the level of the ordinary, and assign it a peculiar place, it is nevertheless not isolated, not severed from the history of mankind. Rather is it most intimately interwoven with world-affairs at every point throughout its whole extent. As the diameter, Jewish history is again and again intersected by the chords of the historical circle. The fortunes of the pilgrim people scattered in all the countries of the civilized world are organically connected with the fortunes of the most representative nations and states, and with manifold tendencies of human thought. The bond uniting them is twofold: in the times when the powers of darkness and fanaticism held sway, the Jews were amenable to the "physical" influence exerted by their neighbors in the form of persecutions, infringements of the liberty of conscience, inquisitions, violence of every sort; and during the prevalence

of enlightenment and humanity, the Jews were acted upon by the intellectual and cultural stimulus proceeding from the peoples with whom they entered into close relations. Momentary aberrations and reactionary incidents are not taken into account here. On its side, Jewry made its personality felt among the nations by its independent, intellectual activity, its theory of life, its literature, by the very fact, indeed, of its ideal staunchness and tenacity, its peculiar historical physiognomy. From this reciprocal relation issued a great cycle of historical events and spiritual currents, making the past of the Jewish people an organic constituent of the past of all that portion of mankind which has contributed to the treasury of human thought.

We see, then, that in reference to content Jewish history is unique in both its halves. In the first "national" period, it is the history of a people to which the

epithet "peculiar" has been conceded, a people which has developed under the influence of exceptional circumstances, and finally attained to so high a degree of spiritual perfection and fertility that the creation of a new religious theory of life, which eventually gained universal supremacy, neither exhausted its resources nor ended its activity. Not only did it continue to live upon its vast store of spiritual energy, but day by day it increased the store. In the second "lackland" half, it is the instructive history of a scattered people, organically one, in spite of dispersion, by reason of its unshaken ideal traditions; a people accepting misery and hardship with stoic calm, combining the characteristics of the thinker with those of the sufferer, and eking out existence under conditions which no other nation has found adequate, or, indeed, can ever find adequate. The account of the people as teacher of religion—this is the content

of the first half of Jewish history; the account of the people as thinker, stoic, and sufferer—this is the content of the second half of Jewish history.

A summing up of all that has been said in this and the previous chapter proves true the statement with which we began, that Jewish history, in respect to its quantitative dimensions as well as its qualitative structure, is to the last degree distinctive, and presents a phenomenon of undeniable uniqueness.

III

The Significance of Jewish History

We turn now to the question of the significance to be attached to Jewish history. In view of its peculiar qualities, what has it to offer to the present generation and to future generations as a subject of study and research?

The significance of Jewish history is twofold. It is at once national and universal. At present the fulcrum of Jewish national being lies in the historical consciousness. In the days of antiquity, the Jews were welded into a single united nation by the triple agencies of state, race, and religion, the complete array of material and spiritual forces directed to one point. Later, in the period of homelessness and dispersion, it was chiefly religious consciousness that cemented Jewry

into a whole, and replaced the severed political bond as well as the dulled racial instinct, which is bound to go on losing in keenness in proportion to the degree of removal from primitive conditions and native soil. In our days, when the liberal movements leavening the whole of mankind, if they have not completely shattered the religious consciousness, have at least, in an important section of Jewry, effected a change in its form; when abrupt differences of opinion with regard to questions of faith and cult are asserting their presence; and traditional Judaism developed in historical sequence is proving powerless to hold together the diverse factors of the national organism,—in these days the keystone of national unity seems to be the historical consciousness. Composed alike of physical, intellectual, and moral elements, of habits and views, of emotions and impressions nursed into being and perfection by the hereditary

instinct active for thousands of years, this historical consciousness is a remarkably puzzling and complex psychic phenomenon. By our common memory of a great, stirring past and heroic deeds on the battle-fields of the spirit, by the exalted historical mission allotted to us, by our thorn-strewn pilgrim's path, our martyrdom assumed for the sake of our principles, by such moral ties, we Jews, whether consciously or unconsciously, are bound fast to one another. As Renan well says: "Common sorrow unites men more closely than common joy." A long chain of historical traditions is cast about us all like a strong ring. Our wonderful, unparalleled past attracts us with magnetic power. In the course of centuries, as generation followed generation, similarity of historical fortunes produced a mass of similar impressions which have crystallized, and have thrown off the deposit that may be called "the Jewish national soul."

This is the soil in which, deep down, lies imbedded, as an unconscious element, the Jewish national *feeling*, and as a conscious element, the Jewish national *idea*.

It follows that the Jewish national idea and the national feeling connected with it have their origin primarily in the historical consciousness, in a certain complex of ideas and psychic predispositions. These ideas and predispositions, the deposit left by the aggregate of historical impressions, are of necessity the common property of the whole nation, and they can be developed and quickened to a considerable degree by a renewal of the impressions through the study of history. Upon the knowledge of history, then, depends the strength of the national consciousness.[1]

[1] A different aspect of the same thought is presented with logical clearness in another publication by our author. "The national *idea* and the national *feeling*," says Mr. Dubnow, "must be kept strictly apart. Unfortunately the difference be-

But over and above its national significance, Jewish history, we repeat, possesses universal significance. Let us, in the

tween them is usually obliterated. National feeling is spontaneous. To a greater or less degree it is inborn in all the members of the nation as a feeling of kinship. It has its flood-tide and its ebb-tide in correspondence to external conditions, either forcing the nation to defend its nationality, or relieving it of the necessity for self-defense. As this feeling is not merely a blind impulse, but a complicated psychic phenomenon, it can be subjected to a psychologic analysis. From the given historical facts or the ideas that have become the common treasure of a nation, thinking men, living life consciously, can, in one way or another, derive the origin, development, and vital force of its national feeling. The results of such an analysis, arranged in some sort of system, form the content of the national idea. The task of the national idea it is to clarify the national feeling, and give it logical sanction for the benefit of those who cannot rest satisfied with an unconscious feeling.

"In what, to be specific, does the essence of our Jewish national idea consist? Or, putting the question in another form, what is the cement that unites us into a single compact organism? Territory and government, the external ties usually binding a nation together, we have long ago lost. Their place is filled by abstract principles, by religion and race. Undeniably these are factors of first importance, and yet we ask the question,

first place, examine its value for science and philosophy. Inasmuch as it is pre-eminently a chronicle of ideas and spir-

do they alone and exclusively maintain the national cohesion of Jewry? No, we reply, for if we admitted this proposition, we should by consequence have to accept the inference, that the laxity of religious principle prevailing among free-thinking Jews, and the obliteration of race peculiarities in the 'civilized' strata of our people, bring in their train a corresponding weakening, or, indeed, a complete breaking up, of our national foundations —which in point of fact is not the case. On the contrary, it is noticeable that the latitudinarians, the *libres penseurs*, and the indifferent on the subject of religion, stand in the forefront of all our national movements. Seeing that to belong to it is in most cases heroism, and in many martyrdom, what is it that attracts these Jews so forcibly to their people? There must be something common to us all, so comprehensive that in the face of multifarious views and degrees of culture it acts as a consolidating force. This 'something,' I am convinced, is the community of historical fortunes of all the scattered parts of the Jewish nation. We are welded together by our glorious past. We are encircled by a mighty chain of similar historical impressions suffered by our ancestors, century after century pressing in upon the Jewish soul, and leaving behind a substantial deposit. In short, the Jewish national idea is based chiefly upon the historical consciousness." [Note of the German trl.]

itual movements, Jewish history affords the philosopher or psychologist material for observation of the most important and useful kind. The study of other, mostly dull chapters of universal history has led to the fixing of psychologic or sociologic theses, to the working out of comprehensive philosophic systems, to the determination of general laws. Surely it follows without far-fetched proof, that in some respects the chapter dealing with Jewish history must supply material of the most original character for such theses and philosophies. If it is true, as the last chapter set out to demonstrate, that Jewish history is distinguished by sharply marked and peculiar features, and refuses to accommodate itself to conventional forms, then its content must have an original contribution to make to philosophy. It does not admit of a doubt that the study of Jewish history would yield new propositions appertaining to the philosophy of

history and the psychology of nations, hitherto overlooked by inquirers occupied with the other divisions of universal history. Inductive logic lays down a rule for ascertaining the law of a phenomenon produced by two or more contributory causes. By means of what might be called a laboratory experiment, the several causes must be disengaged from one another, and the effect of each observed by itself. Thus it becomes possible to arrive with mathematical precision at the share of each cause in the result achieved by several co-operating causes. This method of difference, as it is called, is available, however, only for a limited number of phenomena, only for phenomena in the department of the natural sciences. It is in the nature of the case that mental and spiritual phenomena, though they may be observed, cannot be artificially reproduced. Now, in one respect, Jewish history affords the advantages of an ar-

ranged experiment. The historical life of ordinary nations, such nations as are endowed with territory and are organized into a state, is a complete intermingling of the political with the spiritual element. Totally ignorant as we are of the development either would have assumed, had it been dissevered from the other, the laws governing each of the elements singly can be discovered only approximately. Jewish history, in which the two elements have for many centuries been completely disentangled from each other, presents a natural experiment, with the advantage of artificial exclusions, rendering possible the determination of the laws of spiritual phenomena with far greater scientific exactitude than the laws of phenomena that result from several similar causes.

Besides this high value for the purposes of science, this fruitful suggestiveness for philosophic thought, Jewish history, as compared with the history of

other nations, enjoys another distinction in its capacity to exercise an ennobling influence upon the heart. Nothing so exalts and refines human nature as the contemplation of moral steadfastness, the history of the trials of a martyr who has fought and suffered for his convictions. At bottom, the second half of Jewish history is nothing but this. The effective educational worth of the Biblical part of Jewish history is disputed by none. It is called "sacred" history, and he who acquires a knowledge of it is thought to advance the salvation of his soul. Only a very few, however, recognize the profound, moral content of the second half of Jewish history, the history of the diaspora. Yet, by reason of its exceptional qualities and intensely tragic circumstances, it is beyond all others calculated to yield edification to a notable degree. The Jewish people is deserving of attention not only in the time when it displayed its

power and enjoyed its independence, but as well in the period of its weakness and oppression, during which it was compelled to purchase spiritual development by constant sacrifice of self. A thinker crowned with thorns demands no less veneration than a thinker with the laurel wreath upon his brow. The flame issuing from the funeral pile on which martyrs die an heroic death for their ideas is, in its way, as awe-inspiring as the flame from Sinai's height. With equal force, though by different methods, both touch the heart, and arouse the moral sentiment. Biblical Israel the celebrated—medieval Judah the despised—it is one and the same people, judged variously in the various phases of its historical life. If Israel bestowed upon mankind a religious theory of life, Judah gave it a thrilling example of tenacious vitality and power of resistance for the sake of conviction. This uninterrupted life of the spirit, this untiring

aspiration for the higher and the better in the domain of religious thought, philosophy, and science, this moral intrepidity in night and storm and in despite of all the blows of fortune—is it not an imposing, soul-stirring spectacle? The inexpressible tragedy of the Jewish historical life is unfailing in its effect upon a susceptible heart.[1] The wonderful exhibition of spirit triumphant, subduing the pangs of the flesh, must move every heart, and exercise uplifting influence upon the non-Jew no less than upon the Jew.

For non-Jews a knowledge of Jewish history may, under certain conditions,

[1] "If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations—if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land—if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and the actors were also the heroes?" (Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie*. Translation by George Eliot in "Daniel Deronda.")

come to have another, an humanitarian significance. It is inconceivable that the Jewish people should be held in execration by those acquainted with the course of its history, with its tragic and heroic past.[1] Indeed, so far as Jew-haters by

[1] As examples and a proof of the strong humanitarian influence Jewish history exercises upon Christians, I would point to the relation established between the Jews and two celebrities of the nineteenth century, Schleiden and George Eliot. In his old age, the great scientist and thinker accidentally, in the course of his study of sources for the history of botany, became acquainted with medieval Jewish history. It filled him with ardent enthusiasm for the Jews, for their intellectual strength, their patience under martyrdom. Dominated by this feeling, he wrote the two admirable sketches: "*Die Bedeutung der Juden für Erhaltung und Wiederbelebung der Wissenschaften im Mittelalter* (1876) and *Die Romantik des Martyriums bei den Juden im Mittelalter* (1878). According to his own confession, the impulse to write them was "the wish to take at least the first step toward making partial amends for the unspeakable wrong inflicted by Christians upon Jews." As for George Eliot, it may not be generally known that it was her reading of histories of the Jews that inspired her with the profound veneration for the Jewish people to which she gave glowing utterance in

profession are concerned, it is running a risk to recommend the study of Jewish history to them, without adding a word of caution. Its effect upon them might be disastrous. They might find themselves cured of their modern disease, and in the possession of ideas that would render worthless their whole stock in trade. Verily, he must have fallen to the zero-point of anti-Semitic callousness who is not thrilled through and through by the lofty fortitude, the saint-like humility, the trustful resignation to the will of God, the stoic firmness, laid bare by the study of Jewish history. The tribute of respect cannot be readily withheld from him to

"Daniel Deronda." (She cites Zunz, was personally acquainted with Emanuel Deutsch, and carried on a correspondence with Professor Dr. David Kaufmann. See *George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals.* Arranged and edited by her husband, J. W. Cross, Vol. iii, ed. Harper and Brothers.) Her enthusiasm prompted her, in 1879, to indite her passionate apology for the Jews, under the title, "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!"

whom the words of the poet[1] are applicable:

> "To die was not his hope; he fain
> Would live to think and suffer pain."

When, in days to come, the curtain rises upon the touching tragedy of Jewish history, revealing it to the astonished eye of a modern generation, then, perhaps, hearts will be attuned to tenderness, and on the ruins of national hostility will be enthroned mutual love, growing out of mutual understanding and mutual esteem. And who can tell—perhaps Jewish history will have a not inconsiderable share in the spiritual change that is to annihilate national intolerance, the modern substitute for the religious bigotry of the middle ages. In this case, the future task of Jewish history will prove as sublime as was the mission of the Jewish people in the past. The latter consisted

[1] Pushkin.

in the spread of the dogma of the unity of creation; the former will contribute indirectly to the realization of the not yet accepted dogma of the unity of the human race.

IV

The Historical Synthesis

To define the scope of Jewish history, its content and its significance, or its place among scientific pursuits, disposes only of the formal part of the task we have set ourselves. The central problem is to unfold the meaning of Jewish history, to discover the principle toward which its diversified phenomena converge, to state the universal laws and philosophic inferences deducible from the peculiar course of its events. If we liken history to an organic being, then the skeleton of facts is its body, and the soul is the spiritual bond that unites the facts into a whole, that conveys the meaning, the psychologic essence, of the facts. It becomes our duty, then, to unbare the soul of Jewish history, or, in scientific parlance, to

construct, on the basis of the facts, the synthesis of the whole of Jewish national life. To this end, we must pass in review, by periods and epochs, one after another, the most important groups of historical events, the most noteworthy currents in life and thought that tell off the stages in the development of Jewry and of Judaism. Exhaustive treatment of the philosophical synthesis of a history extending over three thousand years is possible only in a voluminous work. In an essay like the present it can merely be sketched in large outline, or painted in miniature. We cannot expect to do more than state a series of general principles substantiated by the most fundamental arguments. Complete demonstration of each of the principles must be sought in the annals that recount the events of Jewish history in detail.

The historical synthesis reduces itself, then, to uncovering the psychologic pro-

cesses of national development. The object before us to be studied is the national spirit undergoing continuous evolution during thousands of years. Our task is to arrive at the laws underlying this growth. We shall reach our goal by imitating the procedure of the geologist, who divides the mass of the earth into its several strata or formations. In Jewish history there may be distinguished three chief stratifications answering to its first three periods, the Biblical period, the period of the Second Temple, and the Talmudic period. The later periods are nothing more than these same formations combined in various ways, with now and then the addition of new strata. Of the composite periods there are four, which arrange themselves either according to hegemonies, the countries in which at given times lay the centre of gravity of the scattered Jewish people, or according to the intellectual currents there predominant.

This, then, is our scheme:

I. The chief formations:
   a) The primary or Biblical period.
   b) The secondary or spiritual-political period (the period of the Second Temple, 538 B. C. E. to 70 C. E.)
   c) The tertiary or national-religious period (the Talmudic period, 70-500).

II. The composite formations:
   a) The Gaonic period, or the hegemony of the Oriental Jews (500-980).
   b) The Rabbinic-philosophical period, or the hegemony of the Spanish Jews (980-1492).
   c) The Rabbinic-mystical period, or the hegemony of the German-Polish Jews (1492-1789).
   d) The modern period of enlightenment (the nineteenth century).

V

The Primary or Biblical Period

In the daybreak of history, the hoary days when seeming and reality merge into each other, and the outlines of persons and things fade into the surrounding mist, the picture of a nomad people, moving from the deserts of Arabia in the direction of Mesopotamia and Western Asia, detaches itself clear and distinct from the dim background. The tiny tribe, a branch of the Semitic race, bears a peculiar stamp of its own. A shepherd people, always living in close touch with nature, it yet resists the potent influence of the natural phenomena, which, as a rule, entrap primitive man, and make him the bond-slave of the visible and material. Tent life has attuned these Semitic nomads to contemplativeness. In the endless

variety of the phenomena of nature, they seek to discover a single guiding power. They entertain an obscure presentiment of the existence of an invisible, universal soul animating the visible, material universe. The intuition is personified in the Patriarch Abraham, who, according to Biblical tradition, held communion with God, when, on the open field, "he looked up toward heaven, and counted the stars," or when, "at the setting of the sun, he fell into benumbing sleep, and terror seized upon him by reason of the impenetrable darkness." Here we have a clear expression of the original, purely cosmical character of the Jewish religion.

There was no lack of human influence acting from without. Chaldea, which the peculiar Semitic shepherds crossed in their pilgrimage, presented them with notions from its rich mythology and cosmogony. The natives of Syria and Canaan, among whom in the course of time

the Abrahamites settled, imparted to them many of their religious views and customs. Nevertheless, the kernel of their pure original theory remained intact. The patriarchal mode of life, admirable in its simplicity, continued to hold its own within the circle of the firmly-knitted tribe. It was in Canaan, however, that the shepherd people hailing from Arabia showed the first signs of approaching disintegration. Various tribal groups, like Moab and Ammon, consolidated themselves. They took permanent foothold in the land, and submitted with more or less readiness to the influences exerted by the indigenous peoples. The guardianship of the sublime traditions of the tribe remained with one group alone, the "sons of Jacob" or the "sons of Israel," so named from the third Patriarch Jacob. To this group of the Israelites composed of smaller, closely united divisions, a special mission was allotted; its develop-

ment was destined to lie along peculiar lines. The fortunes awaiting it were distinctive, and for thousands of years have filled thinking and believing mankind with wondering admiration.

Great characters are formed under the influence of powerful impressions, of violent convulsions, and especially under the influence of suffering. The Israelites early passed through their school of suffering in Egypt. The removal of the sons of Jacob from the banks of the Jordan to those of the Nile was of decisive importance for the progress of their history. When the patriarchal Israelitish shepherds encountered the old, highly complex culture of the Egyptians, crystallized into fixed forms even at that early date, it was like the clash between two opposing electric currents. The pure conception of God, of *Elohim*, as of the spirit informing and supporting the universe, collided with the blurred system of heathen

deities and crass idolatry. The simple cult of the shepherds, consisting of a few severely plain ceremonies, transmitted from generation to generation, was confronted with the insidious, coarsely sensual animal worship of the Egyptians. The patriarchal customs of the Israelites were brought into marked contrast with the vices of a corrupt civilization. Sound in body and soul, the son of nature suddenly found himself in unsavory surroundings fashioned by culture, in which he was as much despised as the inoffensive nomad is by "civilized" man of settled habit. The scorn had a practical result in the enslavement of the Israelites by the Pharaohs. Association with the Egyptians acted as a force at once of attraction and of repulsion. The manners and customs of the natives could not fail to leave an impression upon the simple aliens, and invite imitation on their part. On the other hand, the whole life of the

Egyptians, their crude notions of religion, and their immoral ways, were calculated to inspire the more enlightened among the Israelites with disgust. The hostility of the Egyptians toward the "intruders," and the horrible persecutions in which it expressed itself, could not but bring out more aggressively the old spiritual opposition between the two races. The antagonism between them was the first influence to foster the germ of Israel's national consciousness, the consciousness of his peculiar character, his individuality. This early intimation of a national consciousness was weak. It manifested itself only in the chosen few. But it existed, and the time was appointed when, under more favorable conditions, it would develop, and display the extent of its power.

This consciousness it was that inspired the activity of Moses, Israel's teacher and liberator. He was penetrated alike by national and religious feeling, and his de-

sire was to impart both national and religious feeling to his brethren. The fact of national redemption he connected with the fact of religious revelation. "I am the Lord thy God who have brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt" was proclaimed from Sinai. The God-idea was nationalized. Thenceforth "Eternal" became the name peculiar to the God of Israel. He was, indeed, the same *Elohim*, the Creator of the world and its Guide, who had been dimly discerned by the spiritual vision of the Patriarchs. At the same time He was the special God of the Israelitish nation, the only nation that avouched Him with a full and undivided heart, the nation chosen by God Himself to carry out, alone, His sublime plans.[1] In his wanderings, Israel became

[1] This is the true recondite meaning of the verses Exod. vi, 2-3: "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Eternal: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as *El-Shaddai* (God Almighty), but by my name Eternal I was not known unto them."

acquainted with the chaotic religious systems of other nations. Seeing to what they paid the tribute of divine adoration, he could not but be dominated by the consciousness that he alone from of old had been the exponent of the religious idea in its purity. The resolution must have ripened within him to continue for all time to advocate and cherish this idea. From that moment Israel was possessed of a clear theory of life in religion and morality, and of a definite aim pursued with conscious intent.

Its originators designed that this Israelitish conception of life should serve not merely theoretically, as the basis of religious doctrine, but also practically, as the starting point of legislation. It was to be realized in the daily walks of the people, which at this very time attained to political independence. Sublime religious conceptions were not to be made the content of a visionary creed, the sub-

ject of dreamy contemplation, but, in the form of perspicuous guiding principles, were to control all spheres of individual and social life. Men must beware of looking upon religion as an ideal to be yearned for, it should be an ideal to be applied directly, day by day, to practical contingencies. In "Mosaism," so-called, the religious and the ethical are intimately interwoven with the social and the political. The chief dogmas of creed are stated as principles shaping practical life. For instance, the exalted idea of One God applied to social life produces the principle of the equality of all men before the One Supreme Power, a principle on which the whole of Biblical legislation is built. The commands concerning love of neighbor, the condemnation of slavery, the obligation to aid the poor, humane treatment of the stranger, sympathy and compassion with every living being—all these lofty injunctions ensue as inevitable conse-

quences from the principle of equality. Biblical legislation is perhaps the only example of a political and social code based, not upon abstract reasoning alone, but also upon the requirements of the feelings, upon the finest impulses of the human soul. By the side of formal right and legality, it emphasizes, and, in a series of precepts, makes tangible, the principle of justice and humanity. The Mosaic law is a "propaganda by deed." Everywhere it demands active, more than passive, morality. Herein, in this elevated characteristic, this vital attribute, consists the chief source of the power of Mosaism. The same characteristic, to be sure, prevented it from at once gaining ground in the national life. It established itself only gradually, after many fluctuations and errors. In the course of the centuries, and keeping pace with the growth of the national consciousness, it was cultivated and perfected in detail.

The conquest of Canaan wrought a radical transformation in the life of the Israelitish people. The acquiring of national territory supplied firm ground for the development and manifold application of the principles of Mosaism. At first, however, advance was out of the question. The mass of the people had not reached the degree of spiritual maturity requisite for the espousal of principles constituting an exalted theory of life. It could be understood and represented only by a thoughtful minority, which consisted chiefly of Aaronites and Levites, together forming a priestly estate, though not a hierarchy animated by the isolating spirit of caste that flourished among all the other peoples of the Orient. The populace discovered only the ceremonial side of the religion; its kernel was hidden from their sight. Defective spiritual culture made the people susceptible to alien influences, to notions more closely akin to

its understanding. Residence in Canaan among related Semitic tribes that had long before separated from the Israelites, and adopted altogether different views and customs, produced a far greater metamorphosis in the character of the Israelites than the sojourn in Egypt. After the first flush of victory, when the unity of the Israelitish people had been weakened by the particularistic efforts of several of the tribes, the spiritual bonds confining the nation began to relax. Political decay always brings religious defection in its train. Whenever Israel came under the dominion of the neighboring tribes, he also fell a victim to their cult. This phenomenon is throughout characteristic of the so-called era of the Judges. It is a natural phenomenon readily explained on psychologic grounds. The Mosaic national conception of the "Eternal" entered more and more deeply into the national consciousness, and, accommodating

itself to the limited mental capacity of the majority, became narrower and narrower in compass—the lot of all great ideas! The "Eternal" was no longer thought of as the only One God of the whole universe, but as the tutelar deity of the Israelitish tribe. The idea of national tutelar deities was at that time deeply rooted in the consciousness of all the peoples of Western Asia. Each nation, as it had a king of its own, had a tribal god of its own. The Phenicians had their Baal, the Moabites their Kemosh, the Ammonites their Milkom. Belief in the god peculiar to a nation by no means excluded belief in the existence of other national gods. A people worshiped its own god, because it regarded him as its master and protecting lord. In fact, according to the views then prevalent, a conflict between two nations was the conflict between two national deities. In the measure in which respect for the god of

the defeated party waned, waxed the number of worshipers of the god of the victorious nation, and not merely among the conquerors, but also among the adherents of other religions.[1] These crude, coarsely materialistic conceptions of God gained entrance with the masses of the Israelitish people. If Moab had his Kemosh, and Ammon his Milkom, then Israel had his "Eternal," who, after the model of all other national gods, protected and abandoned his "clients" at pleasure, in

[1] "Ye have forsaken me," says God unto Israel, "and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulations" (Judges x, 13-14). The same idea is brought out still more forcibly in the arguments adduced by Jephthah in his message to the king of Ammon (more correctly, Moab), who had laid claim to Israelitish lands: "Thou," says Jephthah, "mayest possess that which Kemosh thy god giveth thee to possess, but what the Lord our God giveth us to possess, that will we possess" (Judges xi, 24). Usually these words are taken ironically; to me they seem to convey literal truth rather than irony.

the one case winning, in the other losing, the devotion of his partisans. In times of distress, in which the Israelites groaned under the yoke of the alien, the enslaved "forgot" their "conquered" "Eternal." As they paid the tribute due the strange king, and yielded themselves to his power, so they submitted to the strange god, and paid him his due tribute of devotion. It followed that liberation from the yoke of the stranger coincided with return to the God of Israel, the "Eternal." At such times the national spirit leaped into flaming life. This sums up the achievements of the hero-Judges. But the traces of repeated backsliding were deep and long visible, for, together with the religious ideas of the strange peoples, the Israelites accepted their customs, as a rule corrupt and noxious customs, in sharp contrast with the lofty principles of the Mosaic Law, designed to control social life and the life of the individual.

The Prophet Samuel, coming after the unsettled period of the Judges, had only partial success in purifying the views of the people and elevating it out of degradation to a higher spiritual level. His work was continued with more marked results in the brilliant reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. An end was put to the baleful disunion among the tribes, and the bond of national tradition was strengthened. The consolidated Israelitish kingdom triumphed over its former oppressors. The gods of the strange peoples cringed in the dust before the all-powerful "Eternal." But, with the division of the kingdom and the political rupture between Judah and Israel, the period of efflorescence soon came to an end. Again confusion reigned supreme, and customs and convictions deteriorated under foreign influence. Prophets like Elijah and Elisha, feverish though their activity was, stood powerless before the

rank immorality in the two states. The northern kingdom of Israel, composed of the Ten Tribes, passed swiftly downward on the road to destruction, sharing the fate of the numberless Oriental states whose end was inevitable by reason of inner decay. The inspired words of the early Israelitish Prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, their trumpet-toned reproofs, their thrilling admonitions, died unheeded upon the air—society was too depraved to understand their import. It was reserved for later generations to give ear to their immortal utterances, eloquent witnesses to the lofty heights to which the Jewish spirit was permitted to mount in times of general decline. The northern kingdom sank into irretrievable ruin. Then came the turn of Judah. He, too, had disregarded the law of "sanctification" from Sinai, and had nearly arrived at the point of stifling his better impulses in the morass of materialistic living.

At this critical moment, on the line between to be and not to be, a miracle came to pass. The spirit of the people, become flesh in its noblest sons, rose aloft. From out of the midst of the political disturbances, the frightful infamy, and the moral corruption, resounded the impressive call of the great Prophets of Judah. Like a flaming torch carried through dense darkness, they cast a glaring light upon the vices of society, at the same time illuminating the path that leads upward to the goal of the ethical ideal. At first the negative, denouncing element predominated in the exhortations of the Prophets: unsparingly they scourged the demoralization and the iniquity, the social injustice and the political errors prevalent in their time; they threatened divine punishment, that is, the natural consequences of evil-doing, and appealed to the reason rather than the feelings of the people. But gradually they elaborated positive

ideals, more soul-stirring than the ideals identified with the old religious tradition. The Prophets were the first to touch the root of the evil. It is clear that they realized that alien influences and the low grade of intelligence possessed by the masses were not the sole causes of the frequent backsliding of the people. The Jewish doctrine itself bore within it the germ of error. The two chief pillars of the old faith—the nationalizing of the God-idea, and the stress laid upon the cult, the ceremonial side of religion, as compared with moral requirements—were first and foremost to be held responsible for the flagrant departures from the spirit of Judaism. This was the direction in which reform was needed. Thereafter the sermons of the Prophets betray everywhere the intense desire, on the one hand, to restore to the God-idea its original universal character, and, on the other hand, while strongly emphasizing the im-

portance of morality in the religious and the social sphere, to derogate from the value of the ceremonial system. The "Eternal" is no longer the national God of Israel, belonging to him exclusively; He becomes the God of the whole of mankind, the same *Elohim*, Creator and Preserver of the world, whom the Patriarchs had worshiped, and to whom, being His creatures, all men owe worship. His precepts and His laws of morality are binding upon all nations; they will bring salvation and blessing to all without distinction.[1] The ideal of piety consists in the

[1] Two Biblical passages, the one from Deuteronomy, the other from Deutero-Isaiah, afford a signal illustration of the contrast between the religious nationalism of the Mosaic law and the universalism of the Prophets. Moses says to Israel: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved

profession of God and a life of rectitude. The time will come when all nations will be penetrated by true knowledge of God and actuated by the noblest motives; then will follow the universal brotherhood of man. Until this consummation is reached, and so long as Israel is the only nation formally professing the one true God, and accepting His blessed law, Israel's sole task is to embody in himself the highest ideals, to be an "ensign to the nations," to bear before them the banner of God's law, destined in time to effect the trans-

you . . . . " (Deut. vii, 6-8). And these are the words of the prophecy: "Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye people, from far! The Lord hath called me . . . and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified! But I had thought, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. For now said the Lord unto me . . . It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: no, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach unto the end of the earth" (Is. xlix, 1-6).

formation of the whole of mankind. Israel is a missionary to the nations. As such he must stand before them as a model of holiness and purity. Here is the origin of the great idea of the spiritual "Messianism" of the Jewish people, or, better, its "missionism," an eternal idea, far more comprehensive than the old idea of national election, which it supplanted.

These sublime teachings were inculcated at the moment in which Judah was hastening to meet his fate. It had become impossible to check the natural results of the earlier transgressions. The inevitable happened; Babylon the mighty laid her ponderous hand upon tiny Judah. But Judah could not be crushed. From the heavy chastisement the Jewish nation emerged purified, re-born for a new life.

VI

The Secondary or Spiritual-Political Period

The rank and file of a people are instructed by revolutions and catastrophes better than by sermons. More quickly than Isaiah and Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar brought the Jews to a recognition of their tasks. The short span of the Babylonian Exile (586-538 B. C. E.) was a period of introspection and searching self-examination for the people. Spiritual forces hitherto latent came into play; a degree of self-consciousness asserted itself. The people grasped its mission. At last it comprehended that to imitate inferior races, instead of teaching them and making itself a model for them to follow, was treason to its vocation in life. When the hour of release from the Babylonian

yoke struck, the people suddenly saw under its feet "a new earth," and to "a new heaven" above it raised eyes dim with tears of repentance and emotion. It renewed its covenant with God. Like the Exodus from Egypt, so the second national deliverance was connected with a revelation. But the messages delivered by the last Prophets—especially by "the great unknown," the author of the latter part of the Book of Isaiah—were too exalted, too universal in conception, for a people but lately emerged from a severe crisis to set about their realization at once. They could only illumine its path as a guiding-star, inspire it as the ultimate goal, the far-off Messianic ideal. Meanwhile the necessity appeared for uniform religious laws, dogmas, and customs, to bind the Jews together externally as a nation. The moralizing religion of the Prophets was calculated to bring about the regeneration of the individual, regard-

less of national ties; but at that moment the chief point involved was the nation. It had to be established and its organization perfected. The universalism of the Prophets was inadequate for the consolidating of a nation. To this end outward religious discipline was requisite, an official cult and public ceremonies. Led by such considerations, the Jewish captives, on their return to Jerusalem, first of all devoted themselves to the erection of a Temple, to the creating of a visible religious centre, which was to be the rallying point for the whole nation.

The days of the Prophets were over. Their religious universalism could apply only to a distant future. In the present, the nation, before it might pose as a teacher, had to learn and grow spiritually strong. Aims of such compass require centuries for their realization. Therefore, the spiritual-national unification of the people was pushed into the fore-

ground. The place of the Prophet was filled by the Priest and the Scribe. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were permeated by the purpose to make religion and the cult subservient to the cause of national union and isolation. The erection of the Temple, the solemn service with the singing of Psalms and the public reading from the "Book of the Law" (the Pentateuch, which underwent its final redaction at that time), the removal of whatever might arouse the remembrance of strange and heathen institutions—these were the levers of their unifying activity. At first sight this activity might appear almost too one-sided. But if we summon to mind a picture of the conditions prevailing in those days, we are forced to the conclusion that, in the interest of national restoration, a consistent course was imperative. In point of fact, however, some of Ezra's innovations testify to the broad-minded, reformatory

character of this activity; as, for instance, the public reading of the Pentateuch, introduced with a view to making the people see the necessity of obtaining detailed knowledge of the principles of its religion, and obeying the precepts of the Law, not blindly, but with conscious assent. The object steadily aimed at was the elevation of the whole body of the people to the plane of spirituality, its transformation, in accordance with the Biblical injunction, into a "kingdom of priests."

This injunction of civilizing import became the starting point of the activity of all of Ezra's successors, of the so-called school of the *Soferim*, the Scribes, those versed in the art of writing. The political calm that prevailed during the two centuries of the Persian supremacy (538-332 B. C. E.), was calculated to an eminent degree to promote spiritual development and the organization of the inner life of the

people. During this period, a large part of the writings after the Pentateuch that have been received into the Bible were collected, compiled, and reduced to writing. The immortal thoughts of the Prophets clothed themselves in the visible garb of letters. On parchment rolls and in books they were made accessible to distant ages. The impressive traditions transmitted from earliest times, the chronicles of the past of the people, the Psalms brought forth by the religious enthusiasm of a long series of poets, all were gathered and put into literary shape with the extreme of care. The spiritual treasures of the nation were capitalized, and to this process of capitalization solely and alone generations of men have owed the possibility of resorting to them as a source of faith and knowledge. Without the work of compilation achieved by the *Soferim*, of which the uninstructed are apt to speak slightingly, mankind to-day had

no Bible, that central sun in world-literature.

These two centuries may fitly be called the school-days of the Jewish nation; the Scribes were the teachers of Jewry. In the way of original work but little was produced. The people fed upon the store of spiritual food, of which sufficient had been laid up for several generations. It was then that the Jews first earned their title to the name, "the People of the Book." They made subservient to themselves the two mightiest instruments of thought, the art of writing and of reading. Their progress was brilliant, and when their schooling had come to an end, and they stepped out into the broader life, they were at once able to apply their knowledge successfully to practical contingencies. They were prepared for all the vicissitudes of life. Their spiritual equipment was complete.

Nothing could have been more oppor-

tune than this readiness to assume the responsibilities of existence, for a time of peril and menace was again approaching. From out of the West, a new agent of civilization, Hellenism, advanced upon the East. Alexander the Great had put an end to the huge Persian monarchy, and brought the whole of Western Asia under his dominion (332 B. C. E.). His generals divided the conquered lands among themselves. With all their might, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucidae in Syria hellenized the countries subject to their rule. In the old domain of the Pharaohs, as in Babylonia, in Phenicia, and in Syria, the Greek language was currently spoken, Greek ceremonies were observed, the Greek mode of life was adopted. Athens ceded her rights of primogeniture to New Athens, Alexandria, capital of Egypt, and cosmopolitan centre of the civilized world. For a whole century Judea played the sad part of the apple

of discord between the Egyptian and the Syrian dynasty (320-203 B. C. E.). By turns she owned the sway of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae, until finally, in 203, she was declared a Syro-Macedonian province. Here, as in the other parts of their realm, the rulers devoted themselves energetically to the dissemination of Greek culture. Meeting with resistance, they had resort to main force. At first, indeed, a large part of the people permitted itself to be blinded by the "beauty of Japheth," and promoted assimilation with the Greeks. But when the spread of Hellenism began to threaten the spiritual individuality of Judaism, the rest of the nation, endowed with greater capacity of resistance, arose and sturdily repulsed the enemy.

Hellenism was the first gravely dangerous opponent Judaism had to encounter. It was not the ordinary meeting of two peoples, or of two kinds of civilization.

It was a clash between two theories of life that stood abruptly opposed to each other, were, indeed, mutually exclusive. It was a duel between "the Eternal" on the one side, and Zeus on the other—between the Creator of the universe, the invisible spiritual Being who had, in a miraculous way, revealed religious and ethical ideals to mankind, and the deity who resided upon Olympus, who personified the highest force of nature, consumed vast quantities of nectar and ambrosia, and led a pretty wild life upon Olympus and elsewhere. In the sphere of religion and morality, Hellene and Judean could not come close to each other. The former deified nature herself, the material universe; the latter deified the Creator of nature, the spirit informing the material universe. The Hellene paid homage first and foremost to external beauty and physical strength; the Judean to inner beauty and spiritual heroism. The Hel-

lenic theory identified the moral with the beautiful and the agreeable, and made life consist of an uninterrupted series of physical and mental pleasures. The Judean theory is permeated by the strictly ethical notions of duty, of purity, of "holiness"; it denounces licentiousness, and sets up as its ideal the controlling of the passions and the infinite improvement of the soul, not of the intellect alone, but of the feelings as well. These differences between the two theories of life showed themselves in the brusque opposition in character and customs that made the Greeks and the Jews absolute antipodes in many spheres of life. It cannot be denied that in matters of the intellect, especially in the field of philosophy and science, not to mention art, it might have been greatly to the advantage of the Jews to become disciples of the Greeks. Nor is there any doubt that the brighter aspects of Hellenism would make an admir-

able complement to Judaism. An harmonious blending of the Prophets with Socrates and Plato would have produced a many-sided, ideal *Weltanschauung*. The course of historical events from the first made such blending, which would doubtless have required great sacrifices on both sides, an impossible consummation. In point of fact, the events were such as to widen the abyss between the two systems. The meeting of Judaism and Hellenism unfortunately occurred at the very moment when the classical Hellenes had been supplanted by the hellenized Macedonians and Syrians, who had accepted what were probably the worst elements of the antique system, while appropriating but few of the intellectual excellencies of Greek culture. There was another thwarting circumstance. In this epoch, the Greeks were the political oppressors of the Jews, outraging Jewish national feeling through their tyranny to the same

degree as by their immoral life they shocked Jewish ethical feeling and Jewish chastity.

Outraged national and religious feeling found expression in the insurrection of the Maccabees (168 B. C. E.). The hoary priest Mattathias and his sons fought for the dearest and noblest treasures of Judaism. Enthusiasm begets heroism. The Syrian-Greek yoke was thrown off, and, after groaning under alien rule, the Persian, the Egyptian, and the Syro-Macedonian, for four hundred years, Judea became an independent state. In its foreign relations, the new state was secured by the self-sacrificing courage of the first Maccabean brothers, and from within it was supported by the deep-sunk pillars of the spiritual life. The rise of the three famous parties, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes, by no means testifies, as many would have us believe, to national disintegration, but rather to the

intense spiritual activity of the people. The three tendencies afforded opportunity for the self-consciousness of the nation to express itself in all its variety and force. The unbending religious dogmatism of the Sadducees, the comprehensive practical sense of the Pharisees in religious and national concerns, the contemplative mysticism of the Essenes, they are the most important offshoots from the Jewish system as held at that time. In consequence of the external conditions that brought about the destruction of the Maccabean state[1] after a century's existence (165-63

[1] The external causes of the downfall of the Maccabean state, dynastic quarrels, are well known. Much less light has been thrown upon the inner, deeper-lying causes of the catastrophe. These are possibly to be sought in the priestly-political dualism of the Judean form of government. The ideal of a nation educated by means of the Bible was a theocratic state, and the first princes of the Maccabean house, acting at once as regents and as high priests, in a measure reached this ideal. But the attempts of other nations had demonstrated conclusively enough that a dualistic

B. C. E.), the Pharisee tendency, which had proved itself the best in practice, won the upper hand. When Judea was held fast in the clutches of the Roman eagle, all hope of escape being cut off, the far-seeing leaders of the people gained the firm conviction that the only trustworthy support of the Jewish nation lay in its religion. They realized that the preservation of national unity could be effected only by a consistent organization of the religious law, which was to envelop and shape the whole external life of the people. This explains the feverish activ-

form of government cannot maintain itself permanently. Sooner or later one of the two elements, the priestly or the secular, is bound to prevail over the other and crush it. In the Judean realm, with its profoundly religious trend, the priestly element obtained the ascendency, and political ruin ensued. The priestly-political retreated before the priestly-national form of government. Though the religious element was powerless to preserve the *state* from destruction, we shall see that it has brilliantly vindicated its ability to keep the *nation* intact.

ity of the early creators of the Mishna, of Hillel, Shammai, and others, and it interprets also the watchword of still older fame, "Make a fence about the Law." If up to that moment religious usage in its development had kept abreast of the requirements of social and individual life, the requirements out of which it had grown forth, it now became a national function, and its further evolution advanced with tremendous strides. For the protection of the old "Mosaic Laws," a twofold and a threefold fence of new legal ordinances was erected about them, and the cult became more and more complicated. But the externals of religion did not monopolize all the forces. The moral element in the nation was promoted with equal vigor. Hillel, the head of the Pharisee party, was not a legislator alone, he was also a model of humane principles and rare moral attainments.

While Judaism, in its native country,

was striving to isolate itself, and was seizing upon all sorts of expedients to insure this end, it readily entered into relations, outside of Judea, with other systems of thought, and accepted elements of the classical culture. Instead of the violent opposition which the Palestinian Judaism of the pre-Maccabean period, that is, the period of strife, had offered to Hellenism, the tendency to make mutual concessions, and pave the way for an understanding between the two theories of life, asserted itself in Alexandria. In the capital city of the hellenized world the Jews constituted one of the most important elements of culture. According to Mommsen, the Jewish colony in Alexandria was not inferior, in point of numbers, to the Jewish population of Jerusalem, the metropolis. Influenced by Greek civilization, the Jews in turn exercised decisive influence upon their heathen surroundings, and introduced a new principle of

development into the activity of the cultivated classes. The Greek translation of the Biblical writings formed the connecting link between Judaism and Hellenism. The "Septuaginta," the translation of the Pentateuch, in use since the third century before the Christian era, had acquainted the classical world with Jewish views and principles. The productions of the Prophets and, in later centuries, of the other Biblical authors, translated and spread broadcast, acted irresistibly upon the spirit of the cultivated heathen, and granted him a glimpse into a world of hitherto unknown notions. On this soil sprang up the voluminous Judeo-Hellenic literature, of which but a few, though characteristic, specimens have descended to us. The intermingling of Greek philosophy with Jewish religious conceptions resulted in a new religio-philosophic doctrine, with a mystic tinge, of which Philo is the chief exponent. In Jerusalem, Ju-

daism appeared as a system of practical ceremonies and moral principles; in Alexandria, it presented itself as a complex of abstract symbols and poetical allegories. The Alexandrian form of Judaism might satisfy the intellect, but it could not appeal to the feelings. It may have made Judaism accessible to the cultivated minority, to the upper ten thousand with philosophic training; for the masses of the heathen people Judaism continued unintelligible. Yet it was pre-eminently the masses that were strongly possessed by religious craving. Disappointed in their old beliefs, they panted after a new belief, after spiritual enlightenment. In the decaying classical world, which had so long filled out life with materialistic and intellectual interests, the moral and religious feelings, the desire for a living faith, for an active inspiration, had awakened, and was growing with irresistible force.

Then, from deep out of the bosom of

Judaism, there sprang a moral, religious doctrine destined to allay the burning thirst for religion, and bring about a reorganization of the heathen world. The originators of Christianity stood wholly upon the ground of Judaism. In their teachings were reflected as well the lofty moral principles of the Pharisee leader as the contemplative aims of the Essenes. But the same external circumstances that had put Judaism under the necessity of choosing a sharply-defined practical, national policy, made it impossible for Judaism to fraternize with the preachers of the new doctrine. Judaism, in fact, was compelled to put aside entirely the thought of universal missionary activity. Instead, it had to devote its powers to the more pressing task of guarding the spiritual unity of a nation whose political bonds were visibly dropping away.

For just then the Jewish nation, gory

with its own blood, was struggling in the talons of the Roman eagle. Its sons fought heroically, without thought of self. When, finally, physical strength gave out, their spiritual energy rose to an intenser degree. The state was annihilated, the nation remained alive. At the very moment when the Temple was enwrapped in flames, and the Roman legions flooded Jerusalem, the spiritual leaders of Jewry sat musing, busily casting about for a means whereby, without a state, without a capital, without a Temple, Jewish unity might be maintained. And they solved the difficult problem.

VII

The Tertiary Talmudic or National-Religious Period

The solution of the problem consisted chiefly in more strictly following out the process of isolation. In a time in which the worship of God preached by Judaism was rapidly spreading to all parts of the classical world, and the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion were steadily gaining appreciation and active adherence, this intense desire for seclusion may at first glance seem curious. But the phenomenon is perfectly simple. A foremost factor was national feeling, enhanced to a tremendous degree at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Lacking a political basis, it was transferred to religious soil. Every tradition, every custom, however insignificant, was cherished as a jewel. Though without a state and without

territory, the Jews desired to form a nation, if only a spiritual nation, complete in itself. They considered themselves then as before the sole guardians of the law of God. They did not believe in a speedy fulfilment of the prophetical promise concerning "the end of time" when all nations would be converted to God. A scrupulous keeper of the Law, Judaism would not hear of the compromises that heathendom, lately entered into the bosom of the faith, claimed as its due consideration. It refused to sacrifice a single feature of its simple dogmatism, of its essential ceremonies, such as circumcision and Sabbath rest. Moreover, in the period following close upon the fall of the Temple, a part of the people still nursed the hope of political restoration, a hope repudiating in its totality the proclamation of quite another Messianic doctrine. The delusion ended tragically in Bar

Kochba's hapless rebellion (135 C. E.), whose disastrous issue cut off the last remnant of hope for the restoration of an "earthly kingdom." Thereafter the ideal of a spiritual state was replaced by the ideal of a spiritual nation, rallying about a peculiar religious banner. Jewry grew more and more absorbed in itself. Its seclusion from the rest of the world became progressively more complete. Instinct dictated this course as an escape from the danger of extinction, or, at least, of stagnation. It was conscious of possessing enough vitality and energy to live for itself and work out its own salvation. It had its spiritual interests, its peculiar ideals, and a firm belief in the future. It constituted an ancient order, whose patent of nobility had been conferred upon it in the days of the hoary past by the Lord God Himself. Such as it was, it could not consent to ally itself with *parvenus*, ennobled but to-day, and yesterday

still bowing down before "gods of silver and gods of gold." This white-haired old man, with a stormy past full of experiences and thought, would not mingle with the scatter-brained crowd, would not descend to the level of neophytes dominated by fleeting, youthful enthusiasm. Loyally this weather-bronzed, inflexible guardian of the Law stuck to his post—the post entrusted to him by God Himself—and, faithful to his duty, held fast to the principle *j'y suis, j'y reste.*

As a political nation threatened by its neighbors seeks support in its army, and provides sufficient implements of war, so a spiritual nation must have spiritual weapons of defense at its command. Such weapons were forged in great numbers, and deposited in the vast arsenal called the Talmud. The Talmud represents a complicated spiritual discipline, enjoining unconditional obedience to a higher invisible power. Where discipline is con-

cerned, questions as to the necessity for one or another regulation are out of place. Every regulation is necessary, if only because it contributes to the desired end, namely, discipline. Let no one ask, then, to what purpose the innumerable religious and ritual regulations, sometimes reaching the extreme of pettiness, to what purpose the comprehensive code in which every step in the life of the faithful is foreseen. The Talmudic religious provisions, all taken together, aim to put the regimen of the nation on a strictly uniform basis, so that everywhere the Jew may be able to distinguish a brother in faith by his peculiar mode of life. It is a uniform with insignia, by which soldiers of the same regiment recognize one another. Despite the vast extent of the Jewish diaspora, the Jews formed a well-articulated spiritual army, an invisible "state of God" (*civitas dei*). Hence these "knights of the spirit," the citizens of this

invisible state, had to wear a distinct uniform, and be governed by a suitable code of army regulations.

As a protection for Jewish national unity, which was exposed to the greatest danger after the downfall of the state, there arose and developed, without any external influence whatsoever, an extraordinary dictatorship, unofficial and spiritual. The legislative activity of all the dictators—such as, Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiba, the Hillelites, and the Shammaites—was formulated in the Mishna, the "oral law," which was the substructure of the Talmud. Their activity had a characteristic feature, which deserves somewhat particularized description. The laws were not laid down arbitrarily and without ceremony. In order to possess binding force, they required the authoritative confirmation to be found in the Mosaic Books. From these, whether by logical or by forced in-

terpretation of the holy text, its words, or, perchance, its letters, they had to be derived. Each law, barring only the original "traditions," the *Halacha le-Moshe mi-Sinai*, was promulgated over the supreme signature, as it were, that is, with the authentication of a word from the Holy Scriptures. Or it was inferred from another law so authenticated. The elaboration of every law was thus connected with a very complicated process of thought, requiring both inductive and deductive reasoning, and uniting juridical interpretation with the refinements of casuistry. This legislation was the beginning of Talmudic science, which from that time on, for many centuries, growing with the ages, claimed in chief part the intellectual activity of Jewry. The schools and the academies worked out a system of laws at once religious and practical in character, which constituted, in turn, the object of further theoretic study

in the same schools and academies. In the course of time, however, the means became the end. Theoretic investigation of the law, extending and developing to the furthest limits, in itself, without reference to its practical value, afforded satisfaction to the spiritual need. The results of theorizing often attained the binding force of law in practical life, not because circumstances ordered it, but simply because one or another academy, by dint of logic or casuistry, had established it as law. The number of such deductions from original and secondary laws increased in geometric progression, and practical life all but failed to keep up with the theory. The "close of the Mishna," that is, its reduction to writing, had no daunting effect upon the zeal for research. If anything, a new and strong impetus was imparted to it. As up to that time the text of the Holy Scriptures had been made the basis of interpreta-

tion, giving rise to the most diverse inferences, so the rabbis now began to use the law book recently canonized as a new basis of interpretation, and to carry its principles to their utmost consequences. In this way originated first the "Palestinian Gemara." Later, when the Patriarchate in Palestine was stripped of its glory by persecutions, and, in consequence, the centre of activity had to be transferred from the Talmud academies of Palestine to those of Babylonia, supreme place and exclusive dominion were obtained by the "Babylonian Gemara," put into permanent form about the year 500 C. E., a gigantic work, the result of two hundred years of mental labor.

This busy intellectual activity was as comprehensive as it was thoroughgoing. Talmudic legislation, the Halacha, by no means confines itself to religious practices, extensive as this field is. It embraces the whole range of civil and social

life. Apart from the dietary laws, the regulations for the festivals and the divine service, and a mass of enactments for the shaping of daily life, the Talmud elaborated a comprehensive and fairly well-ordered system of civil and criminal law, which not infrequently bears favorable comparison with the famous *rationi scriptæ* of the Romans. While proceeding with extreme rigor and scrupulousness in ritual matters, the Talmud is governed in its social legislation by the noblest humanitarian principles. Doubtless this difference of attitude can be explained by the fact that religious norms are of very much greater importance for a nation than judicial regulations, which concern themselves only with the interests of the individual, and exercise but little influence upon the development of the national spirit.

The most sympathetic aspects of the Jewish spirit in that epoch are revealed

in the moral and poetic elements of the Talmud, in the Agada. They are the receptacles into which the people poured all its sentiments, its whole soul. They are a clear reflex of its inner world, its feelings, hopes, ideals. The collective work of the nation and the trend of history have left much plainer traces in the Agada than in the dry, methodical Halacha. In the Agada the learned jurist and formalist appears transformed into a sage or poet, conversing with the people in a warm, cordial tone, about the phenomena of nature, history, and life. The reader is often thrown into amazement by the depth of thought and the loftiness of feeling manifested in the Agada. Involuntarily one pays the tribute of reverence to its practical wisdom, to its touching legends pervaded by the magic breath of poesy, to the patriarchal purity of its views. But these pearls are not strung upon one string, they are not

arranged in a complete system. They are imbedded here and there, in gay variety, in a vast mass of heterogeneous opinions and sentiments naïve at times and at times eccentric. The reader becomes aware of the thoughts before they are consolidated. They are still in a fluid, mobile state, still in process of making. The same vivacious, versatile spirit is revealed in the Midrashim literature, directly continuing the Agada up to the end of the middle ages. These two species of Jewish literature, the Agada and the Midrashim, have a far greater absolute value than the Halacha. The latter is an official work, the former a national product. Like every other special legislation, the Halacha is bound to definite conditions and times, while the Agada concerns itself with the eternal verities. The creations of the philosophers, poets, and moralists are more permanent than the work of legislators.

Beautiful as the Agada is, and with all its profundity, it lacks breadth. It rests wholly on the national, not on a universal basis. It would be vain to seek in it for the comprehensive universalism of the Prophets. Every lofty ideal is claimed as exclusively Jewish. So far from bridging over the chasm between Israel and the other nations, knowledge and morality served to widen it. It could not be otherwise, there was no influx of air from without. The national horizon grew more and more contracted. The activities of the people gathered intensity, but in the same measure they lost in breadth. It was the only result to be expected from the course of history in those ages. Let us try to conceive what the first five centuries of the Christian era, the centuries during which the Talmud was built up, meant in the life of mankind. Barbarism, darkness, and elemental outbreaks of man's migratory instincts, illustrated

by the "great migration of races," are characteristic features of those centuries. It was a wretched transition period between the fall of the world of antique culture and the first germinating of a new Christian civilization. The Orient, the centre and hearth of Judaism, was shrouded in impenetrable darkness. In Palestine and in Babylonia, their two chief seats, the Jews were surrounded by nations that still occupied the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization, that had not yet risen above naïve mysticism in religion, or continued to be immersed in superstitions of the grossest sort.

In this abysmal night of the middle ages, the lamp of thought was fed and guarded solely and alone by the Jews. It is not astonishing, then, that oblivious of the other nations they should have dispensed light only for themselves. Furthermore, the circumstance must be considered that, in the period under dis-

cussion, the impulse to separate from Judaism gained ground in the Christian world. After the Council of Nicaea, after Constantine the Great had established Christianity as the state-church, the official breach between the Old Testament and the New Testament partisans became unavoidable.

Thus the Jews, robbed of their political home, created a spiritual home for themselves. Through the instrumentality of the numberless religious rules which the Talmud had laid down, and which shaped the life of the individual as well as that of the community, they were welded into a firmly united whole. The Jewish spirit—national feeling and individual mental effort alike—was absorbed in this pursuit of unification. Head, heart, hands, all human functions of the Jew, were brought under complete control and cast into fixed forms, by these five centuries of labor. With painful exactitude, the Talmud pre-

scribed ordinances for all the vicissitudes of life, yet, at the same time, offered sufficient food for brain and heart. It was at once a religion and a science. The Jew was equipped with all the necessaries. He could satisfy his wants from his own store. There was no need for him to knock at strange doors, even though he had thereby profited. The consequences of this attitude, positive as well as negative consequences, asserted themselves in the further course of Jewish history.

VIII

The Gaonic Period, or the Hegemony of the Oriental Jews (500-980)

With the close of the Talmud, at the beginning of the sixth century, the feverish intellectual activity abated. The Jewish centre of gravity continued in Babylonia. In this country, in which the Jewish race had heard its cradle song at the dawn of existence, and later on *Judæa capta* had sat and wept remembering Zion, Judaism, after the destruction of the second Temple and hundreds of years of trials, was favored with a secure asylum. In the rest of the diaspora, persecution gave the Jews no respite, but in Babylonia, under Persian rule, they lived for some centuries comparatively free from molestation. Indeed, they enjoyed a measure of autonomy in internal affairs,

under a chief who was entitled Exilarch (*Resh-Galutha*). The Law and the word of God went forth from Babylonia for the Jews of all lands. The Babylonian Talmud became the authoritative code for the Jewish people, a holy book second only to the Bible. The intellectual calm that supervened at the beginning of the sixth century and lasted until the end of the eighth century, betrayed itself in the slackening of independent creation, though not in the flagging of intellectual activity in general. In the schools and academies of Pumbeditha, Nahardea, and Sura, scientific work was carried on with the same zest as before, only this work had for its primary object the sifting and exposition of the material heaped up by the preceding generations. This was the province of the Sabureans and the Geonim, whose relation to the Talmud was the same as that of the Scribes (the *Soferim*) of the Second Temple to

the Bible (see above, ch. vi). In the later period, as in the earlier, the aim was the capitalization of the accumulated spiritual treasures, an undertaking that gives little occasion for movement and life, but all the more for endurance and industry.

This intellectual balance was destroyed by two events: the appearance of Islam and the rise of Karaism. Islam, the second legitimate offspring of Judaism, was appointed to give to religious thought in the slumbering Orient the slight impulse it needed to start it on its rapid career of sovereign power. Barely emancipated from swaddling clothes, young Hotspur at once began to rage. He sought an outlet for his unconquerable thirst for action, his lust for world-dominion. The victorious religious wars of the followers of Allah ensued. This foreign movement was not without significance for the fate of the Jews. They were surrounded no longer by heathens but by Mohammedans,

who believed in the God of the Bible, and through the mouth of their prophet conferred upon the Jews the honorable appellation of "the People of the Book." In the eighth century the wars ceased, and the impetuous energy of the rejuvenated Orient was diverted into quieter channels. The Bagdad Khalifate arose, the peaceful era of the growth of industry, the sciences, and the arts was inaugurated. Endowed with quick discernment for every enlightening movement, the Jews yielded to the vivifying magic of young Arabic culture.

Partly under the influence of the Arabic tendency to split into religio-philosophic sects, partly from inner causes, Karaism sprang up in the second half of the eighth century. Its active career began with a vehement protest against the Talmud as the regulator of life and thought. It proclaimed the creators of this vast encyclopedia to be usurpers of

spiritual power, and urged a return to the Biblical laws in their unadulterated simplicity. The weakness of its positive principles hindered the spread of Karaism, keeping it forever within the narrow limits of a sect and consigning it to stagnation. What gave it vogue during the first century of its existence was its negative strength, its violent opposition to the Talmud, which aroused strenuous intellectual activity. For a long time it turned Judaism away from its one-sided Talmudic tendency, and opened up new avenues of work for it. True to their motto: "Search diligently in the Holy Scriptures," the adherents of Karaism applied themselves to the rational study of the Bible, which had come to be, among the Talmudists, the object of casuistic interpretation and legendary adornment. By the cultivation of grammar and lexicography as applied to the Biblical thesaurus of words, they resuscitated the

Hebrew language, which, ousted by the Aramaic dialect, had already sunk into oblivion. By the same means they laid the foundation of a school of rejuvenated poetry. In general, thought on religious and philosophic subjects was promoted to a higher degree by the lively discussions between them and the Talmudists.

By imperceptible steps Talmudic Judaism, influenced at once by the enlightened Arabs and the protesting Karaites, departed from the "four ells of the Halacha," and widened its horizon. Among the spiritual leaders of the people arose men who occupied themselves not only with the study of the Talmud but also with a rational exegesis of the Bible, with philology, poetry, philosophy. The great Gaon Saadiah (892-942) united within himself all strands of thought. Over and above a large number of philological and other writings of scientific purport, he created a momentous religio-philosophic

system, with the aim to clarify Judaism and refine religious conceptions. He was an encyclopedic thinker, a representative of the highest Jewish culture and of Arabic culture as well—he wrote his works in Arabic by preference. In this way Jewish thought gained ground more and more in the Orient. It was in the West, however, that it attained soon after to the climax of its development.

Gradually the centre of gravity of Jewry shifted from Asia Minor to Western Europe. Beginning with the sixth century, the sparsely sown Jewish population of Occidental Europe increased rapidly in numbers. In Italy, Byzantium, France, and Visigothic Spain, important Jewish communities were formed. The medieval intolerance of the Church, though neither so widespread nor so violent as it later became, suffered its first outbreak in that early century. The persecutions of the Jews by the Visigothic

kings of Spain and the Bishops Avitus of Clermont and Agobard in France (sixth to the ninth century) were the prelude to the more systematic and the more bloody cruelties of subsequent days. The insignificant numbers of the European Jews and the insecurity of their condition stood in the way of forming an intellectual centre of their own. They were compelled to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of their Oriental brethren in faith. With the beginning of the tenth century the situation underwent a change. Arabic civilization, which had penetrated to Spain in previous centuries, brought about a radical transformation in the character of the country. The realm of the fanatic Visigoths, half barbarous and wholly averse to the light of progress, changed into the prosperous and civilized Khalifate of the Ommeyyades. Thither the best forces of Oriental Jewry transferred themselves. With the growth of the Jewish popula-

tion in Arabic Spain and the strengthening of its communal organization, the spiritual centre of the Jewish people gradually established itself in Spain. The academies of Sura and Pumbeditha yielded first place to the high schools of Cordova and Toledo.

The Jewry of the East resigned the national hegemony to the Jewry of the West. The Geonim withdrew in favor of the Rabbis. After centuries of seclusion, the Jewish spirit once more asserted itself, and enjoyed a period of efflorescence. The process of national growth became more complex, more varied.

IX

The Rabbinic-Philosophical Period, or the Hegemony of the Spanish Jews (980-1492)

The five centuries marked at their beginning by the rise of Arabic-Jewish civilization in Spain and at their end by the banishment of the Jews from Spain (980-1492), offer the Jewish historian an abundance of culture manifestations and intellectual movements so luxuriant that it is well-nigh impossible to gather them up in one formula. The monotony formerly prevailing in Jewish national life, both in its external and in its internal relations, was succeeded by almost gaily checkered variety. Swept along by the movement towards enlightenment that dominated their surroundings, the Jews of Arabic Spain threw themselves into

energetic work in all the spheres of life and thought. While they had political ground more or less firm under their feet, and for the most part enjoyed peace and liberty, the Jews in the Christian lands of Europe stood upon volcanic soil, every moment threatening to swallow them up. Exposed constantly to persecutions, they lived more or less isolated, and devoted themselves to one-sided though intense intellectual activity. Sombre shadows and streaks of bright light alternate with each other in this period. In its second half, the clouds massed themselves heavily upon the darkening horizon. Even the "privileged" Spanish Jews suffered an untoward change in their affairs at the beginning of the thirteenth century: gradually they were withdrawn from under the sovereignty of the Arabs, and made subject to the power of the Catholic monarchs. They became thenceforward the equal partners of their brethren in faith

in the rest of Europe. All without distinction had a share in the spiritual martyrdom which is the greenest bayleaf in the crown of Jewish history. To think and to suffer became the watchword of the whole nation.

At first, as we have said, a considerable portion of the Jewish people enjoyed the happy possibility of thinking. This was during the classical epoch of the Arabic-Jewish Renaissance, which preceded the Italian Renaissance by four centuries. There is a fundamental difference between the two Renaissance periods: the earlier one was signalized by a re-birth of the sciences and of philosophy, the later one pre-eminently of the arts and of literature. The eleventh and twelfth centuries marked the meridian of the intellectual development of mediæval Judaism. As once, in Alexandria, the union of Judaic with Hellenic culture brought in its train a superabundance of

new ideas of a universal character, so again the amalgamation, on Spanish soil, of Jewish culture with Arabic gave rise to rich intellectual results, more lasting and fruitful than the Alexandrian, inasmuch as, in spite of their universal character, they did not contravene the national spirit. The Jewish people dropped its misanthropy and its leaning toward isolation. The Jews entered all sorts of careers: by the side of influential and cultivated statesmen, such as Chasdai ibn Shaprut and Samuel Hanagid, at the courts of the Khalifs, stood a brilliant group of grammarians, poets, and philosophers, like Jonah ibn Ganach, Solomon Gabirol, and Moses ibn Ezra. The philosophic-critical scepticism of Abraham ibn Ezra co-existed in peace and harmony with the philosophic-poetic enthusiasm of Jehuda Halevi. The study of medicine, mathematics, physics, and astronomy went hand in hand with the

study of the Talmud, which, though it may not have occupied the first place with the Spanish Jews of this time, by no means disappeared, as witness the compendium by Alphassi. Unusual breadth and fulness of the spiritual life is the distinction of the epoch. This variety of mental traits combined in a marvelous union to form the great personality of Maimonides, the crown of a glorious period. With one "Strong Hand," this intellectual giant brought order out of the Talmudic chaos, which at his word was transformed into a symmetrical, legal system; with the other, he "guided the Perplexed" through the realm of faith and knowledge. For rationalistic clarity and breadth of view no counterpart to the religio-philosophic doctrine which he formulated can be found in the whole extent of medieval literature. The main feature of the philosophy of Maimonides and of the systems based upon it

is rationalism, not a dry, scholastic, abstract rationalism, but a living rationalism, embracing the whole field of the most exalted psychic phenomena. It is not philosophy pure and simple, but religious philosophy, an harmonization, more or less felicitous, of the postulates of reason with the dogmas of faith. It is reason mitigated by faith, and faith regulated by reason. In the darkness of the middle ages, when the Romish Church impregnated religion with the crudest superstitions, going so far as to forbid its adherents to read the Bible, and when the greatest philosopher representatives of the Church, like Albertus Magnus, would have rejected offhand, as a childish fancy or, indeed, as an heretical chimera, any attempt to rescue the lower classes of the people from their wretched state of spiritual servitude—in a time like this, the truly majestic spectacle is presented of a philosophy declaring war on supersti-

tion, and setting out to purify the religious notions of the people.

Not a breath of this ample spiritual development of the Jews of Arabic Spain reached the Jews living in the Christian countries of Europe. Their circumstances were too grievous, and in sombreness their inner life matched their outer estate. Their horizon was as contracted as the streets of the Jewries in which they were penned. The crusades (beginning in 1096) clearly showed the Jews of France and Germany what sentiments their neighbors cherished towards them. They were the first returns which Christianity paid the Jewish people for its old-time teaching of religion. The descendants of the "chosen people," the originators of the Bible, were condemned to torture of a sort to exhaust their spiritual heritage. Judaism suffered the tragic fate of King Lear. Was it conceivable that the horrors—the rivers of blood,

the groans of massacred communities, the serried ranks of martyrs, the ever-haunting fear of the morrow—should fail to leave traces in the character of Judaism? The Jewish people realized its imminent danger. It convulsively held fast to its precious relics, clung to the pillars of its religion, which it regarded as the only asylum. The Jewish spirit again withdrew from the outer world. It gave itself up wholly to the study of the Talmud. In northern France and in Germany, Talmudic learning degenerated into the extreme of scholastic pedantry, the lot of every branch of science that is lopped off from the main trunk of knowledge, and vegetates in a heavy, dank atmosphere, lacking light and air. Rashi (1064-1105), whose genial activity began before the first crusade, opened up Jewish religious literature to the popular mind, by his systematic commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud.

On the other hand, the Tossafists, the school of commentators succeeding him, by their petty quibbling and hairsplitting casuistry made the Talmudic books more intricate and less intelligible. Such being the intellectual bias of the age, a sober, rationalistic philosophy could not assert itself. In lieu of an Ibn Ezra or a Maimonides, we have Jehuda Hachassid and Eliezer of Worms, with their mystical books of devotion, *Sefer Chassidim*, *Rokeach*, etc., filled with pietistic reflections on the other world, in which the earth figures as a "vale of tears." Poetry likewise took on the dismal hue of its environment. Instead of the varied lyrical notes of Gabirol and Halevi, who sang the weal and woe, not only of the nation, but also of the individual, and lost themselves in psychologic analysis, there now fall upon our ear the melancholy, heart-rending strains of synagogue poetry, the harrowing outcries that forced them-

selves from the oppressed bosoms of the hunted people, the prayerful lamentations that so often shook the crumbling walls of the medieval synagogues at the very moment when, full of worshipers, they were fired by the inhuman crusaders. A mighty chord reverberates in this poetry: *Morituri te salutant.*

One small spot there was, in the whole of Europe, in which Jews could still hope to endure existence and enjoy a measure of security. This was Southern France, or the Provence. The population of Provence had assimilated the culture of the neighboring country, Arabic Spain, and become the mediator between it and the rest of Europe. This work of mediation was undertaken primarily by the Jews. In the twelfth century several universities existed in Provence, which were frequented in great numbers by students from all countries. At these universities the teachers of philosophy, medicine,

and other branches of science were for the most part Jews. The rationalistic philosophy of the Spanish Jews was there proclaimed *ex cathedra*. The Tibbonides translated all the more important works of the Jewish thinkers of Spain from Arabic into Hebrew. The Kimchis devoted themselves to grammatical studies and the investigation of the Bible. In Montpellier, Narbonne, and Lunel, intellectual work was in full swing. Rational ideas gradually leavened the masses of the Provençal population. Conscience freed from intellectual trammels began to revolt against the oppression exercised by the Roman clergy. Through the Albigensian heresy, Innocent III, founder of the papal power, had his attention directed to the Jews, whom he considered the dangerous protagonists of rationalism. The "heresy" was stifled, Provence in all her magnificence fell a prey to the Roman mania for destruction,

and, on the ruins of a noble civilization, the Dominican Inquisition raged with all its horrors (1213).

Thenceforward the Catholic Church devoted herself to a hostile watch upon the Jews. Either she persecuted them directly through her Inquisition, or indirectly through her omnipotent influence on kings and peoples. In the hearts of the citizens of medieval Europe, the flame of religious hatred was enkindled, and religious hatred served as a cloak for the basest passions. Jewish history from that time on became a history of uninterrupted suffering. The Lateran Council declared the Jews to be outcasts, and designed a peculiar, dishonorable badge for them, a round patch of yellow cloth, to be worn on their upper garment (1215). In France the Jews became by turns the victims of royal rapacity and the scapegoats of popular fanaticism. Massacres, confiscations, banishments fol-

lowed by dearly purchased permission to return, by renewed restrictions, persecutions, and oppressions—these were the measures that characterized the treatment of the Jews in France until their final expulsion (1394). In Germany the Jews were not so much hated as despised. They were *servi camerae*, serfs of the state, and as such had to pay oppressive taxes. Besides, they were limited to the meanest trades and to usury and peddling. They were shut up in their narrow Jewries, huddled in wretched cabins, which clustered about the dilapidated synagogue in a shamefaced way. What strange homes! What gigantic misery, what boundless suffering dumbly borne, was concealed in those crumbling, curse-laden dwellings! And yet, how resplendent they were with spiritual light, what exalted virtues, what lofty heroism they harbored! In those gloomy, tumbledown Jew houses, intellectual endeavor was at

white heat. The torch of faith blazed clear in them, and on the pure domestic hearth played a gentle flame. In the abject, dishonored son of the Ghetto was hidden an intellectual giant. In his nerveless body, bent double by suffering, and enveloped in the shabby old cloak still further disfigured by the yellow wheel, dwelt the soul of a thinker. The son of the Ghetto might have worn his badge with pride, for in truth it was a medal of distinction awarded by the papal Church to the Jews, for dauntlessness and courage. The awkward, puny Jew in his way was stronger and braver than a German knight armed cap-a-pie, for he was penetrated by the faith that "moves mountains." And when the worst came to the worst, he demonstrated his courage. When his peaceful home was stormed by the bestialized hordes of Armleder, or the drunken bands of the Flagellants, or the furious avengers of the "Black Death,"

he did not yield, did not purchase life by disgraceful treason. With invincible courage he put his head under the executioner's axe, and breathed forth his heroic spirit with the enthusiastic cry: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One."

At length the turn of the Spanish Jews arrived. For the unbroken peace they had enjoyed, they had to atone by centuries of unexampled suffering. By degrees, the Arabs were forced out of the Pyrenean Peninsula, and the power they had to abdicate was assumed by the Catholic kings of Castile and Aragon. In 1236 occurred the fall of Cordova, the most important centre of Arabic Jewish culture. Thereafter Arab power held sway only in the province of Granada. The fortunes of the Spanish Jews underwent a calamitous change. The kings and the upper ten thousand were, indeed, favorably disposed toward them. At

the courts of Castile and Aragon, the Jews were active as ministers, physicians, astronomers. But the people, incited by the propaganda of the clerics, nursed frightful hatred against the Jews, not only as "infidels," but also as intellectual aristocrats. The rage of the populace was the combustible material in the terrific explosions that occurred periodically, in the bloody saturnalia of the Pastouraux (1320), in the Black Death riots (1348), in the massacre of Seville (1391).

Dire blows of fortune were unable to weigh down the Spanish Jew, accustomed to independence, as they did the German Jew. He carried his head proudly on high, for he was conscious that in all respects he stood above the rabble pursuing him, above its very leaders, the clerics. In spite of untoward fate his mental development proceeded, but inevitably it was modified by the trend of the times. By the side of the philosophic tendency

of the previous age, a mystical tendency appeared in literature. The Kabbala, with its mist-shrouded symbolism, so grateful to the feelings and the imagination, chimed in better than rationalistic philosophy with the depressed humor under which the greater part of the Jews were then laboring. Another force antagonistic to rationalistic philosophy was the Rabbinism transplanted from France and Germany. The controversy between Rabbinism and philosophy, which dragged itself through three-quarters of a century (1232-1305), ended in the formal triumph of Rabbinism. However, philosophic activity merely languished, it did not cease entirely; in fact, the three currents for some time ran along parallel with one another. Next to the pillars of Rabbinism, Asheri, Rashba, Isaac ben Sheshet, loomed up the philosophers, Gersonides (Ralbag), Kreskas, and Albo, and a long line of Kabbalists, beginning with Nach-

manides and Moses de Leon, the compiler of the Zohar, and ending with the anonymous authors of the mysterious "Kana and Pelia."

The times grew less and less propitious. Catholicism steadily gained ground in Spain. The scowling Dominican put forward his claim upon the Jewish soul with vehement emphasis, and made every effort to drag it into the bosom of the alone-saving Church. The conversion of the Jews would have been a great triumph, indeed, for Catholicism militant. The conversion methods of the Dominican monk were of a most insinuating kind—he usually began with a public religious disputation. Unfortunately, the Jews were experts in the art of debate, and too often by their bold replies covered the self-sufficient dignitaries of Rome with confusion. The Jews should have known, from bitter experience, that such boldness would not be passed over silently. From sumptuous

debating hall to Dominican prison and scaffold was but a short step. In 1391, one of these worthy soul-catchers, Bishop Ferdinando Martinez, set the fanatical mob of Seville on the Jews, and not without success. Terrorized by the threat of death, many accepted Catholicism under duress. But they became Christians only in appearance; in reality they remained true to the faith of their fathers, and, in secret, running the risk of loss of life, they fulfilled all the Jewish ordinances. This is the prologue to the thrilling Marrano tragedy.

Finally, the moment approached when gloomy Catholicism attained to unchallenged supremacy in the Pyrenean Peninsula. On the ruins of the enlightened culture of the Arabs, Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella of Castile reared the reactionary government of medieval Rome. The Inquisition was introduced (1480). Torquemada presided as high priest over

the rites attending the human sacrifices. *Ad gloriam ecclesiæ*, the whole of Spain was illuminated. Everywhere the funeral pyres of the Inquisition flared to the skies, the air was rent by the despairing shrieks of martyrs enveloped in flames or racked by tortures, the prisons overflowed with Marranos,—all instruments of torture were vigorously plied.

At last the hour of redemption struck: in 1492 all Jews were driven from Spain, and a few years later from Portugal. Jewish-Arabic culture after five centuries of ascendency suffered a sudden collapse. The unhappy people again grasped its staff, and wandered forth into the world without knowing whither.

X

The Rabbinic-Mystical Period, or the Hegemony of the German-Polish Jews (1492-1789)

The expulsion from Spain was a stunning blow. The hoary martyr people which had defied so many storms in its long life was for a moment dazed. The soil of Europe was quaking under its feet. At the time when the medieval period had formally come to a close for Occidental Christendom, and the modern period had opened, the middle ages continued in unmitigated brutality for the Jews. If anything, the life of the Jews had become more unendurable than before. What, indeed, had the much-vaunted modern age to offer them? In the ranks of the humanistic movement Reuchlin alone stood forth prominently

as the advocate of the Jews, and he was powerless before the prejudices of the populace. The Reformation in Germany and elsewhere had illuminated the minds of the people, but had not softened their hearts. Luther himself, the creator of the Reformation, was not innocent of hating the followers of an alien faith. The Jews especially did not enjoy too great a measure of his sympathies. The wars growing out of the Reformation, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries devastated Europe in the name of religion, were not calculated to favor the spread of tolerance and milder manners. The conflict raging in the bosom of the Church and setting her own children by the ears, was yet insufficient to divert her maternal care from her "unbelieving" stepchildren. In Spain and Portugal, stakes continued to burn two centuries longer for the benefit of the Marranos, the false Christians. In Ger-

many and Austria, the Jews were kept in the same condition of servitude as before. Their economic circumstances were appalling. They were forced to emigrate *en masse* to Poland, which offered the adherents of their faith a comparatively quiet life, and by and by was invested with the Jewish hegemony. Some of the smaller states and independent towns of Italy also afforded the Jews an asylum, though one not always to be depended upon. A group of hard-driven Spanish exiles, for instance, under the leadership of Abarbanel had found peace in Italy. The rest had turned to Turkey and her province Palestine.

For a time, indeed, the Jewish spiritual centre was located in Turkey. What Europe, old, Christian, and hardhearted, refused the Jews, was granted them by Turkey, young, Mussulman, and liberal. On hearing of the banishment of the Jews from Spain, Sultan Bajazet ex-

claimed: "How can you call Ferdinand of Aragon a wise king, the same Ferdinand who has made his land poor and enriched ours?" His amazement characterizes the relation of Turkey to the Jews of the day. The one-time Marrano, Joseph Nassi, rose to be a considerable dignitary at the court of Sultan Selim (1566-1580). Occasionally he succeeded, by diplomatic means, in wreaking vengeance upon European courts in retaliation for the brutal tortures inflicted upon his people. With the generosity of a Maecenas, he assembled Jewish scholars and poets, and surrounded himself with a sunlit atmosphere of intellectuality and talent. All other Jewish communities looked up to that of Constantinople. Now and again its rabbis played the part of Patriarchs of the synagogue. To this commanding position the rabbis of Palestine especially were inclined to lay claim. They even attempted to restore the Patriarchate,

and the famous controversy between Jacob Berab and Levi ben Chabib regarding the *Semicha* is another evidence of the same assertive tendency. Among the Spanish exiles settled in the Holy Land a peculiar spiritual current set in. The storm-tossed wanderers, but now returned to their native Jordan from the shores of the blood-stained Tagus and Guadalquivir, were mightily moved at the sight of their ancestral home. Ahasuerus, who on his thorn-strewn pilgrim's path had drained the cup of woe to the dregs, suddenly caught sight of the home of his childhood razed level with the ground. The precious, never-to-be-forgotten ruins exhaled the home feeling, which took possession of him with irresistible charm. Into his soul there flowed sweet memories of a golden youth, past beyond recall. The impact of these emotions enkindled passionate "longing for Zion" in the heart of the forlorn, homeless martyr. He

was seized by torturing thirst for political resurrection. Such melancholy feelings and vehement outbursts found expression in the practical Kabbala, originating with Ari (Isaac Luria) and his famous Safed school. A mystical belief in the coming of Messiah thenceforward became one of the essential elements of the Jewish spirit. It vanquished the heart of the learned Joseph Karo, who had brought Rabbinism to its climax by the compilation of his celebrated ritual code, the Shulchan Aruch. With equal force it dominated the being of Solomon Molcho, the enthusiastic youth who, at one time a Marrano, on his public return to Judaism proclaimed the speedy regeneration of Israel. He sealed his faith in his prophecy with death at the stake (1532). The Marranos beyond the Pyrenees and the unfortunate Jews of Italy, who, in the second half of the sixteenth century had to bear the brunt of papal fanaticism, on the in-

crease since the Reformation, were kept in a state of constant excitement by this Messianic doctrine, with its obscure stirrings of hope. A mournful national feeling pervades the Jewish literature of the time. Recollections of torments endured enflamed all hearts. A series of chronicles were thus produced that record the centuries of Jewish martyrdom—*Jochasin*, *Shebet Jehuda*, *Emek ha-Bacha*, etc. The art of printing, even then developed to a considerable degree of perfection, became for the dispersed Jews the strongest bond of spiritual union. The papal *index librorum prohibitorum* was impotent in the face of the all-pervading propaganda for thought and feeling carried on by the printing press.

After Palestine and Turkey, Holland for a time became the spiritual centre of the scattered Jews (in the seventeenth century). Holland was warmly attached to the cause of liberty. When it succeed-

ed in freeing itself from the clutches of fanatical Spain and her rapacious king, Philip II, it inaugurated the golden era of liberty of conscience, of peaceful development in culture and industry, and granted an asylum to the persecuted and abandoned of all countries. By the thousands the harassed Ghetto sons, especially the Marranos from Spain and Portugal, migrated to Holland. Amsterdam became a second Cordova. The intellectual life was quickened. Freedom from restraint tended to break down the national exclusivism of the Jew, and intercourse with his liberal surroundings varied his mental pursuits. Rabbinism, the Kabbala, philosophy, national poetry—they all had their prominent representatives in Holland. These manifold tendencies were united in the literary activity of Manasseh ben Israel, a scholar of extensive, though not intensive, encyclopedic attainments. Free thought and religious

rationalism were embodied in Uriel Acosta. To a still higher degree they were illustrated in the theory of life expounded by the immortal author of the "Theologico-Political Tractate" (1640-1677). This advanced state of culture in Holland did not fail to react upon the neighboring countries. Under the impulse of enthusiasm for the Bible Puritan England under Cromwell opened its portals to the Jews. In Italy, in the dank atmosphere of rabbinical dialectics and morbid mysticism, great figures loom up—Leon de Modena, the antagonist of Rabbinism and of the Kabbala, and Joseph del Medigo, mathematician, philosopher, and mystic, the disciple of Galileo.

These purple patches were nothing more than the accidents of a transition period. The people as a whole was on the decline. The Jewish mind darted hither and thither, like a startled bird seeking its nest. Holland or Turkey was an in-

adequate substitute for Spain, if only for the reason that but a tiny fraction of the Jews had found shelter in either. The Jewish national centre must perforce coincide with the numerical centre of the dispersed people, in which, moreover, conditions must grant Jews the possibility of living undisturbed in closely compacted masses, and of perfecting a well-knit organization of social and individual life. Outside of Spain these conditions were fulfilled only by Poland, which gradually, beginning with the sixteenth century, assumed the hegemony over the Jewry of the world. This marks the displacement of the Sephardic (Spanish, in a broader sense, Romanic) element, and the supremacy of the Ashkenazic (German-Polish) element.

Poland had been a resort for Jewish immigrants from Germany since the outbreak of the Crusades, until, in the sixteenth century, it rose to the position of

a Jewish centre of the first magnitude. As the merchant middle class, the Jews were protected and advanced by the kings and the Szlachta. The consequent security of their position induced so rapid a growth of the Jewish element that in a little while the Jews of Poland outnumbered those of the old Jewish settlements in Occidental Europe. The numerous privileges granted the Jews, by Boleslaus of Kalish (1246), Kasimir the Great (1347-1370), Witowt (1388), Kasimir IV (1447), and some of their successors, fortified their position in the extended territory covered by Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine. Their peculiar circumstances in Poland left an impress upon their inner life. An intense mental activity was called forth. This activity can be traced back to German beginnings, though at the same time it is made up of many original elements. For a space Rabbinism monopolized the intellectual

endeavors of the Polish Jews. The rabbi of Cracow, Moses Isserles, and the rabbi of Ostrog, Solomon Luria (d. 1572), disputed first place with the foremost rabbinical authorities of other countries. Their decisions and circular letters regarding religious and legal questions were accorded binding force. Associates and successors of theirs founded Talmud academies throughout the country, and large numbers of students attended them. Commentators upon the Talmud and expounders of classical works in Jewish theological literature appeared in shoals. Jewish printing establishments in Cracow and Lublin were assiduous in turning out a mass of writings, which spread the fame of the Polish rabbis to the remotest communities. The large autonomy enjoyed by the Polish and Lithuanian Jews conferred executive power upon rabbinical legislation. The *Kahal*, or Jewish communal government, to a cer-

tain degree invested with judicial and administrative competence, could not do without the guiding hand of the rabbis as interpreters of the law. The guild of rabbis, on their side, chose a "college of judges," with fairly extensive jurisdiction, from among their own members. The organization of the Rabbinical Conferences, or the "Synods of the Four Countries," formed the keystone of this intricate social-spiritual hierarchy. The comprehensive inner autonomy and the system of Talmud academies (*Yeshiboth*) that covered the whole of Poland remind one of the brilliant days of the Exilarchate and the Babylonia of the Geonim. One element was lacking, there was no versatile, commanding thinker like Saadia Gaon. Secular knowledge and philosophy were under the ban in Poland. Rabbinism absorbed the whole output of intellectual energy. As little as the Poles resembled the Arabs of the

"golden age," did the Polish Jews resemble their brethren in faith in the Orient at Saadia's time or in the Spain of Gabirol and Maimonides. Isolation and clannishness were inevitable in view of the character of the Christian environment and the almost insuperable barriers raised between the classes of Polish society. But it was this exclusiveness that gave peculiar stability and completeness to the life of the Jew as an individual and as a member of Jewish society, and it was the same exclusiveness that afforded opportunity for the development of a sharply defined culture, for its fixation to the point of resisting violent shocks and beyond the danger point of extinction through foreign invasion.

The fateful year 1648 formed a turning point in the history of the Polish Jews, as in the history of the countries belonging to the Polish crown. The Cossack butcheries and wars of extermination of

1648-1658 were the same for the Polish Jews that the Crusades, the Black Death, and all the other occasions for carnage had been for the Jews of Western Europe. It seemed as though history desired to avoid the reproach of partiality, and hastened to mete out even-handed justice by apportioning the same measure of woe to the Jews of Poland as to the Jews of Western Europe. But the Polish Jews were prepared to accept the questionable gift from the hands of history. They had mounted that eminence of spiritual stability on which suffering loses the power to weaken its victim, but, on the contrary, endues him with strength. More than ever they shrank into their shell. They shut themselves up more completely in their inner world, and became morally dulled against the persecutions, the bitter humiliations, the deep scorn, which their surroundings visited upon them. The Polish Jew gradually accustomed himself

to his pitiable condition. He hardly knew that life might be other than it was. That the Polish lord to whom he was a means of entertainment might treat him with a trace of respect, or that his neighbors, the middle class merchant, the German guild member, and the Little Russian peasant, might cherish kindly feelings toward him, he could not conceive as a possibility. Seeing himself surrounded by enemies, he took precautions to fortify his camp, not so much to protect himself against hostile assaults from without—they were inevitable—as to paralyze the disastrous consequences of such assaults in his inner world. To compass this end he brought into play all the means suggested by his exceptional position before the law and by his own peculiar social constitution. The *Kahal*, the autonomous rabbinical administration of communal affairs, more and more assumed the character of an inner dictatorship.

Jewish society was persistently kept under the discipline of rigid principles. In many affairs the synagogue attained the position of a court of final appeal. The people were united, or rather packed, into a solid mass by purely mechanical processes—by pressure from without, and by drawing tight a noose from within. Besides this social factor tending to consolidate the Jewish people into a separate union, an intellectual lever was applied to produce the same result. Rabbinism employed the mystical as its adjutant. The one exercised control over all minds, the other over all hearts. The growth of mysticism was fostered both by the unfortunate conditions under which the Polish Jews endured existence and by the Messianic movements which made their appearance among the Jews of other countries.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, mysticism reached its zenith in

Turkey, the country in which had stood the cradle of the "practical Kabbala." The teachings of Ari, Vital, and the school established by them spread like wildfire. Messianic extravagances intoxicated the baited and persecuted people. In Smyrna appeared the false Messiah, Sabbatai Zebi. As by magic he attracted to himself a tremendous company of adherents in the East and in the West. For a quarter of a century (1650-1676), he kept the Jewish communities everywhere in a state of quivering suspense.

The harassed people tossed to and fro like a fever patient, and raved about political re-birth. Its delirious visions still further heated its agitated blood. It came to its senses but slowly. Not even the apostasy and death of Sabbatai Zebi sufficed to sober all his followers. Under the guise of a symbolic faith in a Messiah, many of them, publicly or secretly, continued the propaganda for his doctrines.

This propaganda prepared the fertile soil from which, in the eighteenth century, shot up Messianic systems, tending to split Judaism into sects. Nowhere did the mystical teachings evoke so ready a response as in Poland, the very centre of Judaism. At first an ally of the rabbinical school, mysticism grown passionate and uncontrollable now and again acted as the violent opponent of Rabbinism. Secret devotion to the Sabbatian doctrines, which had made their home in Poland, sometimes led to such extremes in dogma and ethics that the rabbis could not contain themselves. Chayyim Malach, Judah Chassid, and other Galician mystics, in the second decade of the eighteenth century brought down upon themselves a rabbinical decree of excommunication. The mystical tendency was the precursor of the heretical half-Christian sect of Frankists, who ventured so far as to lift a hand against the fundamentals

of Judaism: they rejected the Talmud in favor of the Zohar (1756-1773). At the same time a much more profound movement, instinct with greater vitality, made its appearance among the Polish-Jewish masses, a movement rooted in their social and spiritual organization. The wretched, debased condition of the average Jew, conjoined with the traditions of the Kabbala and the excrescences of Rabbinism, created a foothold for Chassidic teaching. Chassidism replaced Talmudic ratiocination by exalted religious sentiment. By the force of enthusiasm for faith, it drew its adherents together into a firmly welded unit in contrast with Rabbinism, which sought the same goal by the aid of the formal law. Scenting danger, the rabbinical hierarchy declared war upon the Kabbala. Emden opposed Eibeschütz, the Polish Sabbatians and Frankists were fought to the death, the Wilna Gaon organized a campaign against the Chassi-

dim. Too late! Rabbinism was too old, too arid, to tone down the impulsive outbreaks of passion among the people. In their religious exaltation the masses were looking for an elixir. They were languishing, not for light to illumine the reason, but for warmth to set the heart aglow. They desired to lose themselves in ecstatic self-renunciation. Chassidism and its necessary dependence upon the Zaddik offered the masses the means of this forgetfulness of self through faith. They were the medium through which the people saw the world in a rosy light, and the consequences following upon their prevalence were seen in a marked intensification of Jewish exclusiveness.

The same aloofness characterizes the Jews of the rest of the eighteenth century diaspora. Wherever, as in Germany, Austria, and Italy, Jews were settled in considerable numbers, they were separated from their surroundings by forbid-

ding Ghetto walls. On the whole, no difference is noticeable between conditions affecting Jews in one country and those in another. Everywhere they were merely tolerated, everywhere oppressed and humiliated. The bloody persecutions of the middle ages were replaced by the burden of the exceptional laws, which in practice degraded the Jews socially to an inferior race, to citizens of a subordinate degree. The consequences were uniformly the same in all countries: spiritual isolation and a morbid religious mood. During the first half of the "century of reason," Jewry presented the appearance of an exhausted wanderer, heavily dragging himself on his way, his consciousness clouded, his trend of thought obviously anti-rationalistic. At the very moment in which Europe was beginning to realize its medieval errors and repent of them, and the era of universal ideals of humanity was dawning, Judaism raised barri-

cades between itself and the world at large. Elijah Gaon and Israel Besht were the contemporaries of Voltaire and Rousseau. Apparently there was no possibility of establishing communication between these two diametrically opposed worlds. But history is a magician. Not far from the Poland enveloped in mediæval darkness, the morning light of a new life was breaking upon slumbering Jewry in German lands. New voices made themselves heard, reverberating like an echo to the appeal issued by the "great century" in behalf of a spiritual and social regeneration of mankind.

XI

The Modern Period of Enlightenment

(The Nineteenth Century)

Two phenomena signalized the beginning of the latest period in Jewish history: the lofty activity of Mendelssohn and the occurrence of the great French Revolution. The man stands for the spiritual emancipation of the Jews, the movement for their political emancipation. At bottom, these two phenomena were by no means the ultimate causes of the social and spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people. They were only the products of the more general causes that had effected a similar regeneration in all the peoples of Western Europe. The new currents, the abandonment of effete intellectual and social forms, the substitution of juster

and more energetic principles, the protest against superstition and despotism—all these traits had a common origin, the resuscitation of reason and free thought, which dominated all minds without asking whether they belonged to Jew or to Christian. It might seem that the rejuvenation of the Jews had been consummated more rapidly than the rejuvenation of the other peoples. The latter had had two centuries, the period elapsing since the middle ages, that is, the period between the Reformation and the great Revolution, in which to prepare for a more rational and a more humane conduct of life. As for the Jews, their middle ages began much later, and ended later, almost on the eve of 1789, so that the revolution in their minds and their mode of life had to accomplish itself hastily, under the urgence of swiftly crowding events, by the omission of intermediate stages. But it must be taken into consideration that long

before, in the Judeo-Hellenic and in the Arabic-Spanish period, the Jews had passed through their "century of reason." In spite of the intervening ages of suffering and gloom, the faculty of assimilating new principles had survived. For the descendants of Philo and Maimonides the rationalistic movement of the eighteenth century was in part a repetition of a well-known historical process. They had had the benefit of a similar course of studies before, and, therefore, had no need to cram on the eve of the final examination.

In point of fact, the transformation in the life of the Jews did take place with extraordinary swiftness. It was hastened in France by the principles of the Revolution and the proclamation of the civil equality of Jews with the other citizens. In Germany, however, it advanced upon purely spiritual lines. Mendelssohn and Lessing, the heralds of spiritual reform,

who exposed old prejudices, carried on their labors at a time in which the Jews still stood beyond the pale of the law, a condition which it did not occur to Frederick II, "the philosopher upon the throne," to improve. A whole generation was destined to pass before the civil emancipation of the German Jews was accomplished. Meantime their spiritual emancipation proceeded apace, without help from the ruling powers. A time so early as the end of the eighteenth century found the German Jews in a position to keep step with their Christian fellow-citizens in cultural progress. Enlightened Jews formed close connections with enlightened Christians, and joined them in the universal concerns of mankind as confederates espousing the same fundamental principles. If they renounced some of their religious and national traditions, it was by no means out of complaisance for their neighbors. They were

guided solely and alone by those universal principles that forced non-Jews as well as Jews to reject many traditions as incompatible with reason and conscience. Non-Jews and Jews alike yielded themselves up to the fresh inspiration of the time, and permitted themselves to be carried along by the universal transforming movement. Mendelssohn himself, circumspect and wise, did not move off from religious national ground. But the generation after him abandoned his position for that of universal humanity, or, better, German nationality. His successors intoxicated themselves with deep draughts of the marvelous poetry created by the magic of Goethe and Schiller. They permitted themselves to be rushed along by the liberty doctrines of 1789, they plunged head over heels into the vortex of romanticism, and took an active part in the conspicuous movements of Europe, political, social, and literary, as witness Börne, Heine, and their fellow-combatants.

The excitement soon evaporated. When the noise of the liberty love-feasts had subsided, when the cruel reaction (after 1814) had settled heavily upon the Europe of the nineteenth century, and God's earth had again become the arena of those agents of darkness whom dreamers had thought buried forever beneath the ruins of the old order, then the German Jews, or such of them as thought, came to their senses. The more intelligent Jewish circles realized that, in devotion to the German national movement, they had completely neglected their own people. Yet their people, too, had needs, practical or spiritual, had its peculiar national sphere of activity, circumscribed, indeed, by the larger sphere of mankind's activities as by a concentric circle, but by no means merged into it. To atone for their sin, thinking Jews retraced their steps. They took in hand the transforming of Jewish inner life, the simplification

of the extremely complicated Jewish ritual, the remodeling of pedagogic methods, and, above all, the cultivation of the extended fields of Jewish science, whose head and front is Jewish historical research in all its vastness and detail. Heine's friend, Zunz, laid the cornerstone of Jewish science in the second decade of the nineteenth century. His work was taken up by a goodly company of zealous and able builders occupied for half a century with the task of rearing the proud edifice of a scientific historical literature, in which national self-consciousness was sheltered and fostered. At the very height of this reforming and literary activity, German Jewry was overwhelmed by the civil emancipation of 1848. Again a stirring movement drew them into sympathy with a great general cause, but this time without drawing them away from Jewish national interests. Cultural and civil assimilation was accomplished as an

inner compelling necessity, as a natural outcome of living. But spiritual assimilation, in the sense of a merging of Judaism in foreign elements, was earnestly repudiated by the noblest representatives of Judaism. It was their ideal that universal activity and national activity should be pursued to the prejudice of neither, certainly not to the exclusion of one or the other, but in perfect harmony with each other. In point of fact, it may be asserted that, in spite of a frequent tendency to go to the one or the other extreme, the two currents, the universal and the national, co-exist within German Jewry, and there is no fear of their uniting, they run parallel with each other. The Jewish genius is versatile. Without hurt to itself it can be active in all sorts of careers: in politics and in civil life, in parliament and on the lecture platform, in all branches of science and departments of literature, in every one of the chambers

of mankind's intellectual laboratory. At the same time it has its domestic hearth, its national sanctuary; it has its sphere of original work and its self-consciousness, its national interests and spiritual ideals rooted in the past of the Jew. By the side of a Lassalle, a Lasker, and a Marx towers a Riesser, a Geiger, a Graetz. The leveling process unavoidably connected with widespread culture, so far from causing spiritual desolation in German Judaism, has, on the contrary, furnished redundant proof that even under present conditions, so unfavorable to what is individual and original, the Jewish people has preserved its vitality to the full.

An analogous movement stirred the other countries of Western Europe—France, Italy, and England. The political emancipation of the Jews was accomplished earlier in them than in Germany. The reconstruction of the inner life, too, proceeded more quietly and regularly,

without leaps and bounds, and religious reform established itself by degrees. Yet even here, where the Jewish contingent was insignificant, the spiritual physiognomy of the Jews maintained its typical character. In these countries, as in Germany, the Jew assimilated European culture with all its advantages and its drawbacks. He was active on diplomatic fields, he devoted himself to economic investigations, he produced intellectual creations of all kinds—first and last he felt himself to be a citizen of his country. None the less he was a loyal son of the Jewish people considered as a spiritual people with an appointed task. Crémieux, Beaconsfield, Luzzatti are counterbalanced by Salvador, Frank, Munk, Reggio, and Montefiore. All the good qualities and the shortcomings distinctive of the civilization of modern times adhere to the Jew. But at its worst modern civilization has not succeeded in extinguish-

ing the national spirit in Jewry. The national spirit continues to live in the people, and it is this spirit that quickens the people. The genius of Jewish history, as in centuries gone by, holds watch over the sons of the "eternal people" scattered to all ends of the earth. West-European Jewry may say of itself, without presumption: *Cogito ergo sum.*

Russian Jewry, the Jewry that had been Polish, and that is counted by the millions, might, if necessary, prove its existence by even more tangible marks than Occidental Jewry. To begin with, the centre of gravity of the Jewish nation lies in Russia, whose Jews not only outnumber those of the rest of Europe, but continue to live in a compact mass. Besides, they have preserved the original Jewish culture and their traditional physiognomy to a higher degree than the Jews of other countries. The development of the Russian Jews took a course

very different from that of the Jews of the West. This difference was conditioned by the tremendous contrast between Russian culture and West-European culture, and by the change which the external circumstances of Jews outside of Russia underwent during the modern period. The admission of the Polish provinces into the Russian Empire at the end of the eighteenth century found the numerous Jewish population in an almost medieval condition, the same condition in which the non-Jewish population of Russian Poland was at that time. The Polish régime, as we saw above, had isolated the Jews alike in civil and spiritual relations. The new order did not break down the barriers. The masses of Jews cooped up in the "Pale of Settlement" were strong only by reason of their inner unity, their firmly established patriarchal organization. The bulwark of Rabbinism and the citadel of Chassidism protected them

against alien influences. They guarded their isolation jealously. True to the law of inertia, they would not allow the privilege of isolation to be wrested from them. They did not care to step beyond the ramparts. Why, indeed, should the Jews have quitted their fortress, if outside of their walls they could expect nothing but scorn and blows? The unfortunates encaged in the sinister Pale of Settlement could have been lured out of their exclusive position only by complete civil emancipation combined with a higher degree of culture than had been attained by Russian society, an impossible set of circumstances in the first half of the nineteenth century. The legislative measures of the time, in so far as they relate to the Jews, breathe the spirit of police surveillance rather than of enlightenment and humanity. To civilizing and intellectual influences from without the way was equally barred. Yet all this watch-

fulness was of no avail. Nothing could prevent the liberty principles espoused by the Jews of Western Europe from being smuggled into the Pale, to leaven the sad, serried masses. A sluggish process of fermentation set in, and culminated in the literary activity of Isaac Beer Levinsohn and of the Wilna reformers of the second and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. They were the harbingers of approaching spring.

When spring finally came (after 1855), and the sun sent down his genial rays upon the wretched Jewry of Russia, life and activity began to appear at once, especially in the upper strata. As in Germany, so in Russia spiritual emancipation preceded political emancipation. Still shorn almost entirely of the elementary rights of citizens, the Russian Jews nevertheless followed their ideal promptings, and participated enthusiastically in the movement for enlightenment which

at that time held the noblest of the Russians enthralled. In a considerable portion of the Russian Jewish community a process of culture regeneration began, an eager throwing off of outworn forms of life and thought, a swift adoption of humane principles. Jewish young men crowded into the secular schools, in which they came in close contact with their Christian contemporaries. Influenced by their new companions, they gave themselves up to Russian national movements, often at the cost of renunciation of self. Some of them, indeed, in one-sided aspiration strove to become, not Russians, but men. The influence exercised by literature was more moderate than that of the schools. Rabbinic and Chassidistic literature, on the point of dying out as it was, abandoned the field to the literature of enlightenment in the Hebrew language, a literature of somewhat primitive character. It consisted chiefly of naïve novels

and of didactic writings of publicists, and lacked the solid scientific and historical element that forms the crown of Western Jewish literature. It is indisputable, however, that it exerted an educational influence. Besides, it possesses the merit of having resuscitated one of the most valuable of Jewish national possessions, the Hebrew language in its purity, which in Russia alone has become a pliant instrument of literary expression. A still greater field was reserved for the Jewish-Russian literature that arose in the "sixties." It was called into being in order to present a vivid and true picture of the social and spiritual interests of the Jews. Proceeding from discussions of current political topics, this literature gradually widened its limits so as to include Jewish history, Jewish science, and the portrayal of Jewish life, and more and more approached the character of a normal European literature. All this was in the

making, and the most important work had not yet begun. The lower strata of the people had not been touched by the fresh air. In time, if all had gone well, they, too, would have had their day. And if the minority of the Jewish people in the West in a short span of time brought forth so many notable workers in so many departments of life and thought, how much superior would be the culture achievements of the Eastern majority! How vigorously the mighty mental forces latent in Russian Jewry would develop when their advance was no longer obstructed by all sorts of obstacles, and they could be applied to every sphere of political, social, and intellectual life!

Nothing of all this came to pass; exactly the opposite happened. Not only were the barriers in the way of a prosperous, free development of Jewry not removed, but fresh hindrances without number were multiplied. Some spectre

of the middle ages, some power of darkness, put brakes upon the wheel of history. It first appeared in the West, under the name anti-Semitism, among the dregs of European society. But in its earliest abode it was and is still met with an abrupt rebuff on the part of the most intelligent circles, those whom even the present age of decadence has not succeeded in robbing of belief in lofty moral ideals. Anti-Semitism in the West is in *anima vili*. Its cult is confined to a certain party, which enjoys a rather scandalous reputation. But there are countries in which this power of darkness, in the coarser form of Judophobia,[1] has cast its baleful spell upon the most influential members of society and upon the press. There it has ripened noxious fruit. Mocking at the exalted ideals and the ethical traditions of religious and thinking mankind, Judophobia shamelessly

[1] As anti-Semitism is called in Russia.

professes the dogma of misanthropy. Its propaganda is bringing about the moral ruin of an immature society, not yet confirmed in ethical or truly religious principles. Upon its victims, the Jews, it has the same effect as the misfortunes of the middle ages, which were meted out to our hoary people with overflowing measure, and against which it learnt to assume an armor of steel. The recent severe trials are having the same result as the persecutions of former days: they do not weaken, on the contrary, they invigorate the Jewish spirit, they spur on to thought, they stimulate the pulse of the people.

> "The hammer shivers glass,
> But iron by its blows is forged."[1]

The historical process Jewry has undergone repeatedly, it must undergo once again. But now, too, in this blasting time of confusion and dispersion, of daily torture and the horrors of international

[1] Pushkin.

conflict, "the keeper of Israel slumbereth not and sleepeth not." The Jewish spirit is on the alert. It is ever purging and tempering itself in the furnace of suffering. The people which justly bears the name of the veteran of history withdraws and falls into a revery. It is not a narrow-minded fanatic's flight from the world, but the concentrated thought of a mourner. Jewry is absorbed in contemplation of its great, unparalleled past. More than ever it is now in need of the teachings of its past, of the moral support and the prudent counsels of its history, its four thousand years of life crowded with checkered experiences.

XII

The Teachings of Jewish History

Let us return now to the starting point of our discussion, and endeavor to establish the thoughts and lessons to be deduced from the course of Jewish history.

Above all, Jewish history possesses the student with the conviction that Jewry at all times, even in the period of political independence, was pre-eminently a spiritual nation, and a spiritual nation it continues to be in our own days, too. Furthermore, it inspires him with the belief that Jewry, being a spiritual entity, cannot suffer annihilation: the body, the mold, may be destroyed, the spirit is immortal. Bereft of country and dispersed as it is, the Jewish nation lives, and will go on living, because a creative principle permeates it, a principle that

is the root of its being and an indigenous product of its history. This principle consists first in a sum of definite religious, moral, or philosophic ideals, whose exponent at all times was the Jewish people, either in its totality, or in the person of its most prominent representatives. Next, this principle consists in a sum of historical memories, recollections of what in the course of many centuries the Jewish people experienced, thought, and felt, in the depths of its being. Finally, it consists in the consciousness that true Judaism, which has accomplished great things for humanity in the past, has not yet played out its part, and, therefore, may not perish. In short, the Jewish people lives because it contains a living soul which refuses to separate from its integument, and cannot be forced out of it by heavy trials and misfortunes, such as would unfailingly inflict mortal injury upon less sturdy organisms.

This self-consciousness is the source from which the suffering Jewish soul draws comfort. History speaks to it constantly through the mouth of the great apostle who went forth from the midst of Israel eighteen hundred years ago: "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. . . . Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward" (Epistle to the Hebrews, x, 32-34, 35).

Jewish history, moreover, arouses in the Jew the desire to work unceasingly at the task of perfecting himself. To direct his attention to his glorious past, to the resplendent intellectual feats of his ancestors, to their masterly skill in thinking and suffering, does not lull him

to sleep, does not awaken a dullard's complacency or hollow self-conceit. On the contrary, it makes exacting demands upon him. Jewish history admonishes the Jews: "*Noblesse oblige.* The privilege of belonging to a people to whom the honorable title of the 'veteran of history' has been conceded, puts serious responsibilities on your shoulders. You must demonstrate that you are worthy of your heroic past. The descendants of teachers of religion and martyrs of the faith dare not be insignificant, not to say wicked. If the long centuries of wandering and misery have inoculated you with faults, extirpate them in the name of the exalted moral ideals whose bearers you were commissioned to be. If, in the course of time, elements out of harmony with your essential being have fastened upon your mind, cast them out, purify yourselves. In all places and at all times, in joy and and in sorrow, you must aim to live for

the higher, the spiritual interests. But never may you deem yourselves perfect. If you become faithless to these sacred principles, you sever the bonds that unite you with the most vital elements of your past, with the first cause of your national existence."

The final lesson to be learned is that in the sunny days of mankind's history, in which reason, justice, and philanthropic instinct had the upper hand, the Jews steadfastly made common cause with the other nations. Hand in hand with them, they trod the path leading to perfection. But in the dark days, during the reign of rude force, prejudice, and passion, of which they were the first victims, the Jews retired from the world, withdrew into their shell, to await better days. Union with mankind at large, on the basis of the spiritual and the intellectual, the goal set up by the Jewish Prophets in their sublime vision of the future (Isaiah, ch. ii,

and Micah, ch. iv), is the ultimate ideal of Judaism's noblest votaries. Will their radiant hope ever attain to realization?

If ever it should be realized,—and it is incumbent upon us to believe that it will,—not a slight part of the merits involved will be due to Jewish history. We have adverted to the lofty moral and humanitarian significance of Jewish history in its role as conciliator. With regard to one-half of Jewish history, this conciliatory power is even now a well-established fact. The first part of Jewish history, the Biblical part, is a source from which, for many centuries, millions of human beings belonging to the most diverse denominations have derived instruction, solace, and inspiration. It is read with devotion by Christians in both hemispheres, in their houses and their temples. Its heroes have long ago become types, incarnations of great ideas. The events it relates serve as living ethical formulas.

But a time will come—perhaps it is not very far off—when the second half of Jewish history, the record of the two thousand years of the Jewish people's life after the Biblical period, will be accorded the same treatment. This latter part of Jewish history is not yet known, and many, in the thrall of prejudice, do not wish to know it. But ere long it will be known and appreciated. For the thinking portion of mankind it will be a source of uplifting moral and philosophical teaching. The thousand years' martyrdom of the Jewish people, its unbroken pilgrimage, its tragic fate, its teachers of religion, its martyrs, philosophers, champions, this whole epic will in days to come sink deep into the memory of men. It will speak to the heart and the conscience of men, not merely to their curious mind. It will secure respect for the silvery hair of the Jewish people, a people of thinkers and sufferers. It will

dispense consolation to the afflicted, and by its examples of spiritual steadfastness and self-denial encourage martyrs in their devotion. It is our firm conviction that the time is approaching in which the second half of Jewish history will be to the noblest part of *thinking* humanity what its first half has long been to *believing* humanity, a source of sublime moral truths. In this sense, Jewish history in its entirety is the pledge of the spiritual union between the Jews and the rest of the nations.

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